

# ***Community without Propinquity Revisited: Communications Technology and the Transformation of the Urban Public Sphere***

---

**Craig Calhoun, *New York University***

Recent discussions of the Internet have touted “virtual community” and a capacity to enhance citizen power in democracies. The present essay (a) calls for a more rigorous understanding of community; (b) suggests that relationships forged with the aid of electronic technology may do more to foster “categorical identities” than they do dense, multiplex, and systematic networks of relationships; and (c) argues that an emphasis on community needs to be complemented by more direct attention to the social bases of discursive publics that engage people across lines of basic difference in collective identities. Previous protest movements have shown that communications media have an ambiguous mix of effects. They do facilitate popular mobilization, but they also make it easy for relatively ephemeral protest activity to outstrip organizational roots. They also encourage governments to avoid concentrating their power in specific spatial locations and thus make revolution in some ways more difficult.

In *City of Bits* William Mitchell writes that his keyboard is his café (1995, p. 7). My café is the Lanterna, a much more old-fashioned sort, up half a flight of stairs from MacDougal Street in the Village—Greenwich Village, not the Electronic Village. It has a great old brass espresso machine sputtering steam behind the bar and splendid apricot tarts. I do take my laptop there sometimes, and I do even answer and initiate e-mail off-line to be sent later. But it matters that my café is the Lanterna and not my keyboard. I may run into my friend Michael, with whom I also exchange e-mail, and we will interact somewhat differently face-to-face.

Down the street from the Lanterna is a cybercafé where the owners provide machines and fiber optic links as well as coffee (though no apricot tarts). I note people leave their computer-equipped offices and homes and go to this computer-equipped and sociable public space. There are, in other words, dimensions of publicness and sociability reproduced poorly if at all in computer-mediated communication (CMC). Yet CMC is an enormously powerful bundling of technologies, rich in possibilities. It is convenient and also generative, giving rise to new practices of social interaction, new patterns in the production and dissemination of culture. These are amply, if mainly impressionistically, discussed. But not all technological possibilities become social realities, and the directions of actual

change depend a good deal on existing institutions and distributions of power and resources. To only a limited extent does CMC upset rather than reinforce these hierarchies or realize dreams of cyberdemocracy and virtual community.

It has been nearly thirty-five years since Melvin Webber (1963) wrote famously of "community without propinquity." Webber's classic essay countered a common sociological tendency to exaggerate the loss of community, to imagine that modernity and the metropolis could only be sites of impersonal anonymity, and simply to oppose community to structures of complex association, bureaucracy, and professionalization rather than identifying the nodes of communal organization within them. Webber showed how friendships could be maintained at a distance and how community of a sort could emerge on the basis of professional groupings and complex organizations as well as neighborhoods—even among sociologists meeting annually at ASA conventions. In doing so, he revealed a sound appreciation of the growing choice, flexibility, and multiplicity of relational groupings. His grasp of the importance—and transcendability—of spatial dispersion reminds us that we knew something of time-space distancing even before Hagestrand and Giddens, and before the Internet.

Yet Webber's classic study also had a notable flaw. The conception of community with which he worked was remarkably vague and weak. Community meant no more to Webber than clusters of personal relationships characterized by some common identity and perhaps a bit of emotional warmth. His conceptual framework did not distinguish the sense or feeling of community from its relational structure; it did not differentiate between the kinds of relationships likely only face-to-face and those readily achieved by electronic communications technology; it did not clarify differences in the patterns of relationships—e.g., density or multiplexity—that might vary with propinquity (and relative isolation), making the community of a remote coalmining town a different thing from the professional bonds and personal friendships of, say, the more dispersed "community" of social theorists. This problem returns in studies of electronic communities—and even more surprisingly, perhaps, in much currently fashionable communitarian theory.

In the present essay I want (a) to challenge those exploring the social implications of computer networks to do so with a bit more rigorous understanding of community and its relationship to other possible modes of social integration; (b) to suggest some reasons why the indirect relationships forged with the aid of electronic technology may do more to foster "categorical identities" than the dense, multiplex, and systematic webs of relationships that the term "network" would lead one to expect; and (c) to argue that an emphasis on community by itself can be seriously misleading about both social solidarity generally and the political implications of electronic communication in particular, and needs to be complemented by more direct attention to the social bases of discursive publics

that engage people across lines of basic difference in collective identities. *Inter alia*, I will also suggest that we would do well to set our discussions of the latest electronic media in a bit deeper historical context—not just of technology but of the spatial organization of power and movements challenging that power—and to remember that electronic media include not only computers and the Internet but also a range of other technologies and that however dramatic it may be, the Internet has not yet surpassed the impact of television and radio.

Let me begin with some historical background—though it is more a matter of allusive example than detailed narrative. I call your attention to the similarities and differences in three waves of radical activity: the revolutions of 1848, the 1960s protest movements, and the 1989 collapse of communism.

### **The End of Revolution as an Urban Phenomenon**

On the morning of 24 February 1848, Alexis de Tocqueville, a member of the French National Assembly, heard from his cook that “the government was having the poor people massacred” (1971, p. 46). Ever the curious social observer, he went outside. As soon as he set foot in the street, he could “scent revolution in the air.” *Walking* to the house of one of the king’s counsellors, he met and questioned a member of the National Guard who was hurrying to take up arms in defense of the people. Barricades were in place, and the guardsman knew his appointed corner.

One of the things which emerges most clearly from accounts like Tocqueville’s diary of 1848 is how much the drama of the revolution was played out in face-to-face interactions and personal relationships. Not only were the various revolutionary elites in direct contact with each other, but it was possible for rumor to run like electricity through the circuits of the Paris streets. Barricades were set up in specific neighborhoods, by groups of people who were generally familiar with each other and who shared a common memory of where barricades had been before.

The revolution of 1848 was made almost entirely in Paris, a point often overlooked by theorists. It was made in a series of highly local actions, as crowds moved, for example, from the Assembly to the Hotel de Ville. The hotel, indeed, is aptly named to symbolize French revolutions because they were all creatures of the city, however much they might have been echoed or, as was the case in part in 1848, unmade in the countryside. The *national* workshops were in Paris, for example (which caused the flood of unemployed people seeking work in Paris to increase). To be sure the Republican government had to contend with problems in provincial cities. But like Louis Philippe before them, the threat ministers had to fear was from the Parisian crowd. The eventual, apparently democratic decision to grant the vote with universal suffrage to the country as a whole was, as it happened, as much a way of containing the revolution as of extending it.<sup>1</sup> Even

when revolutionary action took place throughout France, it was organized as a proliferation of local confrontations. The national government was highly localized; it could only be attacked in one place: Paris.

It is perhaps not shocking that great theorists of popular struggle like Tocqueville and Karl Marx should have taken this urban character of the revolution so much for granted. Marx theorized it, for example, in terms of the differences of *interests* between the urban proletariat and peasants. But Marx did not consider the implications for the future of revolution of the end of the old pattern of urban dominance, the eclipse of the city as what Giddens (1985a) has accurately, if inelegantly, called a “power container.” It has certainly been noticed how Paris was rebuilt in fundamental ways after 1848 (Harvey 1985, ch. 3). For example, boulevards were broadened not only to reduce the advantage to insurgents in barricade fighting but to also ease the movements of troops. The distribution of industry, residence and governmental buildings shifted. But what has been less noticed is that even in France, perhaps the most centralized of modern countries, administration was extended throughout the country in sufficient degree that the chance of an urban insurrection becoming a true revolution was sharply reduced. Something of this was shown in 1871 when a strong urban revolt failed decisively to produce a national revolution.<sup>2</sup>

Revolution in the sense of 1848 (which in most practical, logistical terms was not so different from 1789) ceased to be possible after railroads, telegraphs, improved administrative infrastructure, etc., united whole countries. No modern European (or, more broadly, “rich country”) government could be toppled simply by riots in a capital city. Government itself was no longer so spatially contained.<sup>3</sup> After 1848 the revolutionary initiative shifted away from the core European countries, not just because their populations were not “the wretched of the earth” but because of their development of a new level of integrated national administration, transportation, and communications infrastructure. The older revolutionary tradition continued most especially in those parts of the world where national infrastructures were weak and gave primate cities overwhelmingly central roles. This is a key reason why revolutions, in the classical sense of the term, remained possible primarily in the Third World and, ironically, in the communist societies—where indeed urban crowds figured importantly in the events of 1989 and the ensuing toppling of regimes (see, e.g., Pfaff 1996).<sup>4</sup>

This lesson was partly learned, more than twenty years later, by Marx and others observing the fate of the Paris Commune in 1871. It did not, however, penetrate to the most basic understanding of revolution which Marx, like many others, had formed in the experience of 1848 and reflection on 1789. Though the next generation of critical theorists was concerned with the end of revolution and was critical of mass mediated society, they too failed to grasp the full implications of the transformation in the spatial organization of power for a popular political

transformation. It is not unrelated to the notion of an administered society that Horkheimer and Adorno took from Max Weber. But while they saw this in terms of the character of state action, they did not see the importance of infrastructure and scale as such. Neither does Habermas, though there are direct implications for the appeal to communicative action and qualities of the lifeworld as the ground of critique. To return to the example, the meaning of recourse to direct popular political participation changes fundamentally with the shift of focus from Paris and various other local contexts to a France unified by media from newspapers to TV. The contrast between 1848 and 1968 is instructive.

The not-so-revolutionary events of 1968 involved a variety of local dramas: in Paris and Berlin, Berkeley and Chicago, New York and London. But they were all forged into a single drama by the extraordinary coverage of the international and national news media. In a very real sense, the 1960s student movement could not have happened as it did without TV; it was a creature of the media (Hodgson 1976; Gitlin 1987). This is not to deny the reality of the grass-roots mobilization, but to stress how much the movement's ability to reach beyond specific campuses and left-wing social groupings depended on its ability to seize public attention through mass media.

In 1968 folk musicians and communards, college students interested in sex and drugs and rock 'n roll, and activists of the New Left could without much difficulty see themselves as part of a single common movement. In the U.S. the very polarization of the country as a whole fostered this apparent unity of the counterculture (Hodgson 1976, p. 349). It could appear to be them against us; long hair and tie-dyed shirts or skirts could be badges of recognition for young people united by a vague idea of opposition to the Establishment and its conventions. But 1968 was a hidden crisis as well as a manifest apogee for popular action. Between 1968 and 1970 movement activism expanded enormously, and the New Left ceased to be the center in anything resembling the same sense. The media took slogans and images to kids who adopted them without ever being directly involved in antiwar protest, though they might have rebelled against their high school administrators. Moreover, the various countercultural passions which provided so much of the energy behind the rapid growth of the New Left now seemed to explode the bounds of movement unity and coherence. The image of "the Revolution" proliferated in 1967-68—at the very point at which the political focus of the movement(s) was being dissipated and the political and cultural were pulling apart. Much of the apolitical counterculture was ripe for appropriation by Madison Avenue and Hollywood, of course, and this served to further weaken the political movement even while it gave the illusion of continual expansion. That this—and the centrality of the media—were most characteristic of the U.S. is not only a matter of political culture but of scale. Not only the quality of discourse but its social structural bases were at issue—as in Habermas's (1962

[1989]) famous account of the structural transformation of the public sphere. This does not mean, however, that more cultural passions were politically irrelevant or essentially misguided. Politics and counterculture were inextricably intertwined, as Todd Gitlin (1987) has shown in his splendid book on the 1960s.

But of course no western state was ever seriously threatened by revolution in 1968, though many were pushed to change (perhaps slowly) their policies. In 1968 it was quite clear (more so indeed in the U.S. than in France) that the state was not a geographically localized phenomenon which could be challenged head on in a capital city. Rather, the struggle of the 1960s was clearly for the hearts and minds of a widely dispersed population. It is best understood as a struggle against ideological hegemony, using the very media which ordinarily helped to legitimate authority and encountering a variety of difficulties by doing so. Not the least was a fatal inability to sustain its momentum once the TV cameras were pointed elsewhere after the peak of media-disseminated protest in 1970.

The nature of this struggle helps to explain the popularity of Frankfurt School critical theory with its emphasis on consciousness among theoretically inclined New Left intellectuals. This sort of struggle was also presaged more by Lukacs's account of reification and Gramsci's ideas on ideology and the war of position than it was by classical Marxism, partly because Marx did not pay systematic attention to changing patterns of concrete social relations or to the role of communication in societal integration.<sup>5</sup> Though he did not theorize the shifting place of the city or the transformation of social infrastructure as such, Gramsci, in a few brief passages, did see something of the sea change 1848 marked in democratic politics:

Modern political technique became totally transformed after Forty-eight; after the expansion of parliamentarism and of the associative systems of union and party, and the growth in the formation of the vast State and "private" bureaucracies (i.e., politico-private, belonging to parties and trade unions); and after the transformations which took place in the organization of the forces of order in the wide sense . . . (1971, p. 221).

The transformations after 1848 were crucial to the rise of the sort of ideological hegemony which Gramsci thought characteristic of mature capitalism. In place of permanent revolution, he suggested, one saw "permanently organized consent" (1971, p. 80). In the language of the Frankfurt School, the administered society joined forces with the culture industry.<sup>6</sup> The movements of the 1960s were one of the major challenges this consent has seen and were not without effect, though it was more limited than protagonists' revolutionary dreams.

The 1989 events in the erstwhile communist countries bear out the lesson. One of the key features of communist political regimes was a high level of centralization of political power, in spatial as well as social terms. The pattern of mid-nineteenth-century western European crisis could be followed in and after

1989 in part because large urban crowds could effectively represent “the people” (while the people at large had little media capacity to proffer their own self-representations). At the same time, those crowds could strike, materially or symbolically, at the core of state power which remained significantly localized and personalized rather than—ironically and in contrast to certain aspects of popular imagery of the bureaucratic socialist states—distributed in altogether impersonal “systems” with “delinguistified steering media.” In other words, where western states and market economies operated more or less effectively on the basis of highly dispersed individual and collective action, without depending on central instructions or plan, once the capacity and will for centralized direction was undermined in the communist societies their political and economic regimes were deeply disrupted. At the same time, the overwhelming importance of the centralized party-state apparatus served to unify grievances; whatever their existential source, all seemed to bear on the administrative apparatus (either in demanding solution from that apparatus or in being unresolvable without elimination or transformation of that apparatus). And while activist organizations of long standing played a crucial role in some countries, such as Poland, it was media representations that galvanized public opinion elsewhere and generated crowds out of proportion to any organizational capacity to create an effective new regime.

### **“Virtual” and Directly Interpersonal Community**

Social theory has been slow to give a central place to consideration of these sorts of changes in infrastructure. Our conceptions of revolution, and of social integration itself, remain shaped too much by experiences in directly interpersonal relations and give too little attention to the growing importance of indirect relationships mediated by technology and complex organizational structures.<sup>7</sup> While the distinction between primary and secondary relationships is a staple of sociological wisdom, thus, we need also to keep in mind that both these sorts of relationships involve direct interaction, usually face-to-face. Even relatively impersonal secondary relationships (a) are with identifiable persons and (b) have the potential for changing their character if the parties expand the frame of their interaction. Electronic communication figures in primary relationships mainly as a useful supplement: I exchange frequent e-mail with my wife while she is in Africa, but neither of us considers this a substitute for face-to-face contact. Electronic communication may reduce reliance on some sorts of secondary relationships—as electronic banking may minimize interactions with tellers; whether this makes our lives more impersonal or frees up time for interactions more truly personal than most of us have with bank tellers is a debatable judgment call.

Electronic communications technologies have much more dramatic impact, I think, in encouraging the proliferation of indirect relationships. These are relationships in which the mediation of complex organizations, markets, or media

eliminates directly interpersonal contact. What I call tertiary relationships are those that could in principle be directly interpersonal. I could try to meet the benefactors of my university who make my job possible, discover who made my shoes, or meet everyone in my Usenet discussion groups face-to-face. But for the most part, I won't. Beyond these tertiary relationships are those that on principle could not be transformed into the directly interpersonal—those created by surveillance technology, for example, and those mediated by extremely complex systems behind which there lies no single individual creator or even an identifiable group. My dealings with IBM are certainly a matter of social relationships, thus, but there is no way to grasp what it means to relate to a corporation simply by discovering the individuals behind it. More generally, where there is no directly interpersonal dimension to our relationships, we are especially prone to treat people as wholly subsumed under certain categories of identity—whether gender, or race, or occupation. We are prone to reify or anthropomorphize collective actors, like corporations. One of the major challenges for social theory comes to be demonstrating the genuine social relationships—and human agency—behind the complexity of markets, the apparent “personality” of corporations, and the categories of identity that define us as consumers and often as communicators on the Internet.

The Internet is the latest wave of new communications technology to bring dramatic predictions of transformation in community and political activity. Its importance is unassailable, but we misunderstand it (a) if we exaggerate its novelty rather than situate it within a continuing series of transformations in communication and transportation capacities that have shaped the whole modern era and (b) if we fail to take seriously the differences between the ways in which people are commonly linked on the electronic web and the organization of face-to-face relationships.<sup>8</sup>

In a sense, the excitement of the new technology may lead us to ask the wrong question, or at least to proceed one-sidedly. Research projects commonly start with computer-mediated communication and then look for community. One quickly finds, for example, that multi-user domains (MUDs) often cultivate a rhetoric of community and a sense of belonging, and develop some normative order. But one finds too that most members remain anonymous (or shielded by pseudonyms), that MUD use remains mainly an entertainment-expressive activity, that commitment levels are low, and that even intense participation is episodic. Few specifically interpersonal relationships—dyads, triads, small sub-groups—complement dispersed participation in the loose-knit whole.

But perhaps we should start the other way around. Look first for communities and then study the role of computers and other media of communication within them. More generally, study the range of different forms of social solidarity—



community, movement, work organization, nation, party—and ask how CMC figures or might figure in each, what explains the variance, and what its significance is. Or, start not from forms of solidarity but from practices or actions. What are people doing? How and how much do they use CMC to do it? How does this matter?

While attention is focused on the Internet and dispersed “virtual communities,” some of the most important uses of computers to nurture community may be extremely local, based on the near-universal wiring and usage of people in an immediate area. Such localization of networking facilitates both local solidarity and effective dealings with more distant power structures. Similarly, task use of CMC may do more to build communities than the production of recreational online “communities.” CMC can supplement face-to-face contact and encourage organizing around common agendas for action. It can provide a powerful new channel for connections among people already linked by residence or engagement in a common organizational framework (such as professional workers in the same field or with the same employer).

It is early to make conclusive arguments about a technology as rapidly developing as computer-mediated communications. From the perspective of personal identity and social psychology, as Turkle (1995) has argued eloquently, the new technologies offer a host of opportunities for play and transformation, and are impressively unpredictable. In social organizational terms as well, the Internet and allied technologies offer a variety of possibilities, including some that would change society dramatically. Overall, however, it seems clear that the general tendency is not for the web to produce a radical democracy of constant citizen participation and instant referenda, nor to counter tendencies to urbanization, nor to empower the poor, weak, and dispersed against the rich, powerful, and well-positioned. Computer-mediated communication does a little of each of these things, but it does a lot to enhance existing power structures.

An interesting question, indeed, is whether the experience of computer-mediated communication encourages adequate recognition of the structures of power that lie behind machines and the web. Ideologists of the Internet have long advocated a kind of cyberdemocracy and often convinced themselves that it was developing. Some hackers have attacked powerful institutional computer systems out of more or less vague attachments to cyberdemocratic ideals as well as for the fun of the game. But the kinds of recreational computer uses that Turkle (1995) analyzes promote an experience of decentralized use, with participants in multi-user groups coming from all over, and of easily shifting identities and/or anonymity in role play. This is a far cry from the ways in which computer-mediated communication (including financial transactions) produces data on individuals' lives (both private and public), and potential surveillance based on that data. It is

a far cry from the ways in which corporations use computers to organize global production and distribution systems, including those that make possible recreational computer communication. The corporate structure behind computers and the Internet is impressively centralized. Is the centralization of power—political and economic—abetted by the experience of decentralization among everyday users of computer-mediated communication?

Much is made of the way in which the Internet is used to enhance popular mobilization, for example, and it is a powerful tool for this. Famously, it has been used to call international attention to the struggle of Mexico's Zapatistas, to rally China's exiled democracy activists, to link environmentalists on every continent. Important though this is, however, it is more than counterbalanced by the use of computer-mediated communications (not to mention surveillance and data management) by law enforcement agencies and state regulators, by giant corporations distributing production and avoiding unions, and by capitalist communications media which have grown more, not less, centralized in the Internet era.

The fantasies of net enthusiasts often focus on "virtual communities" and social movements organized entirely on the web. The reality, however, seems to be that the Internet matters much more as a supplement to face-to-face community organization and movement activity than as a substitute for it. Local community activists worried about environmental depredations by polluting manufacturers, for example, can gain technical information, can contact others in similar situations, and can wage publicity campaigns designed to hit corporations financially. Neighborhood advocates worried about the placement of a highway can find out about other communities with similar fears and join together to lobby the state highway department or the governor's office. The Internet is thus a very useful tool, but the strength of these movements still lies largely in their local roots; the Internet is most empowering when it adds to the capacities of people organized outside it, not when an attempt is made to substitute "virtual community" for the real thing.<sup>9</sup>

Popular writing about the Internet tends not only toward wild predictions but toward technological determinism. More sober analysts remind us that like other technologies, the Internet mainly makes it easier for us to do some things we were already doing and allows those with the resources to do some things they already wanted to do. While more radically novel uses will be found over time—and this is much of what determines which technologies are most "revolutionary"—the main impact, especially in the short to medium term, will be to allow us to do more of things we already were organized and oriented to do. This is why the spread of personal computers and network links in the 1980s did not produce the paperless offices of popular fantasy, but instead helped us to produce even more correspondence, filing, and indeed academic publications. We would do better to keep in mind that which of the possibilities opened by the Internet

are in fact realized will depend on human choice, social organization, and the distribution of resources. The greatest flexibility lies in things that individuals can easily do for themselves—hence the joyous cacophony of Usenet discussion groups. The more a particular possible use of the Internet depends on social organization and the mobilization of significant resources, the more it will tend to be controlled by those who are already organized and well-off. The Internet is thus a good tool for labor organizers, but it does not tip the balance decisively in favor of labor against capital. The new capacity for dispersed local organizers to communicate around the country is confronted by a new capacity for corporations to organize their production globally.

So what does the web facilitate? First, the maintenance of dispersed face-to-face networks. The most important of the discussion groups, LISTSERVs, bulletin boards, and the like are those that allow people who do meet face-to-face to stay in touch between meetings and exchange text and data. Most of everyone's e-mail, for example, is not with strangers but with those whom they know directly in the context of their work, and secondarily with friends and family. The Internet here is a direct extension of Webber's "community without propinquity." But recall that Webber's title was in a sense misleading. What he described were mainly relationships among people who were not immediate neighbors, but who lived in the same metropolitan area and drove or used mass transit to get together—community with at least a little propinquity. Similarly, Rheingold (1993, p. 2) writes that "the WELL," the famous virtual village he helped to build in San Francisco

felt like an authentic community to me from the start because it was grounded in my everyday physical world. WELLites who don't live within driving distance of the San Francisco Bay area are constrained in their ability to participate in the local networks of face-to-face acquaintances.

The label "virtual community" is thus in a sense an overstatement. Likewise, I communicate regularly with sociologists throughout the U.S. and indeed the rest of the world. To the extent that my network resembles a community—or part of one—it is largely because we also meet at conventions and conferences. We do not gather as a single large group, of course, any more than old-fashioned villages were only communities when everyone gathered for a town meeting. I meet my friends and colleagues in dyads and triads when I or they travel. These contacts do as much as the web to keep the network knit together.

Second, computer-mediated communication enables people to telecommute. So far, this has happened a good deal less than optimists thought it might in the early years of the current spread of personal computers (see Calhoun 1986 for discussion). It is most common among a small number of labor market niches—salesmen such as stockbrokers who would have gone to the office and then phoned clients but now do it from home, for example, and low-level data processing

workers. The implications may be very different for those in high-end and low-end jobs. The former may gain flexibility and readily supplement their computer-mediated communication with travel. The latter may find themselves confined. Largely female, data processing workers may be drawn to the opportunity to work from home in order to gain flexibility for childcare, but they may also suffer much more social loss from choosing it. Early apostles of telecommuting liked to cite examples of high-tech professionals transmitting all over the world from remote, bucolic settings: beside a mountain lake or on a gentleman's ranch in Montana. This happens. It is misleading, however, as to the implications and conditions of more general reliance on telecommuting. First, this works best when workers supplement their computer-mediated communication with at least occasional face-to-face contact. Second, those who telecommute may be happiest in places where they can readily enjoy sociable contact, in neighborhoods or towns with public spaces. Third, even interior architecture may be a problem. A substantial stock of recently built homes has favored an "open-plan" interior design. However aesthetically attractive, this is at odds with the privacy, compartmentalization of tasks, and buffering of noise that telecommuting demands. Telecommuters may, perhaps appropriately, prefer interior plans echoing the exterior elements of Victorian designs appropriated into some postmodern architecture. It does appear that central cities are attractive to telecommuters. That is, far from using the technology to facilitate dispersion, many young professionals are using it to achieve a flexible lifestyle within newly vibrant central city neighborhoods. These often operate on twenty-four-hour schedules, and telecommuting may facilitate the reorganization of time as much as space. Such increasingly popular urban neighborhoods offer, among other things, a variety of options for face-to-face sociability to complement CMC. They even offer public settings from computer use—from cybercafés to the more old-fashioned sort, in which one may still work on a laptop and listen to the sputtering steam of a cappuccino machine.<sup>10</sup>

Third, the web facilitates the development of cultural and socio-spatial "enclaves." This is a dimension of the transformation of metropolitan areas obscured by Webber's notion of community without propinquity. Just as people could choose to maintain friendships with people spread around Los Angeles, say, they could also choose to live in a neighborhood cut off from others, narrowly defined in class terms by the pricing of its housing, and characterized by the particular identities and lifestyle choices of its residents. This could be a gay community, a singles community, a "no-children" community, a community of White ethnics trying to avoid Blacks, or an immigrant community complete with street signs in Korean, Chinese, or Spanish. Some of these lifestyle enclaves would qualify as communities in the strongest sociological senses, others as communities only in their ideology, weakly linked in fact by internal networks. For some, Internet chat rooms are like bars—they facilitate meetings among strangers as well as recurrent

visits among familiars. But the deepest question is to what extent links are maintained across the boundaries of such enclaves, especially if we are able to organize our “community without propinquity” largely in terms of further personal lifestyle choices and cultural similarities. This was a pattern already developing well before the Internet. What computer-mediated communication adds is a greater capacity to avoid public interaction of the kind that would pull one beyond one’s immediate personal choices of taste and culture. Discussion groups may transcend the spatial community, thus, but they do so precisely by linking people with *similar* interests, not by forging links among people sharply different from one another. Indeed, one of the distinctive—and in many ways attractive—features of Internet groups is participants’ capacities to control the presentation of their identities, not only bending gender but keeping aspects of themselves entirely backstage which they could not avoid presenting more publicly in sustained interpersonal interaction.<sup>11</sup>

Fourth, computerized communication facilitates interest group activities. The most successful mobilization on the Internet is an extension of direct-mail political advertising. The Internet is a very successful vehicle for mobilizing people based on one interest at a time, to raise money and to generate “public opinion”—as expressed both in discussion and in floods of letters to congressional representatives or newspaper editorial pages. But note that interest groups are not, *per se*, communities. They are precisely categories of people linked by sharing of a single concern, rather than networks that bind people across many arenas of activity and across lines of significant social differences.

In the case of both enclaves and interest groups, we see how the new technologies often enhance “categorical” identities rather than the dense and multi-plex webs of interpersonal relationships the label “network” suggests and that we commonly associate with the idea of community. In short, while people like to describe the kind of social organization wrought by electronic communications as “the rise of the network society” (Castells 1996), in fact society was already and for a long time a matter of networks. The new communications technologies further action on the basis of categories of similarity more often than they strengthen local networks.

### **The Transformation of the Urban Public Sphere**

Since the mid-nineteenth century, cities have grown in scale but have become in some ways less politically central. While they contain more people, they contain less of power relations and public discourse, both of which spill over their boundaries aided by new communications media. Habermas began to address the implications of such transformations in his account of the public sphere of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Europe. But winding up with an analysis of mass society in the 1950s, he was unable to ground an adequate critical theory

of contemporary society. His later work on communicative action lacks similar focus on the basic issues of social structural transformation. How, we need to ask again, can “the people” act, and when does their (or its) action reasonably count as democratic? More specifically, how can the people act when faced with a world in which societal integration is accomplished largely on an enormous scale through complex systems of indirect relations and when the everyday world of face-to-face relationships, however deeply valued, no longer serves as a meaningful microcosm of the broadest level of social structure? What’s missing from theories of democracy, these questions should make us realize, are adequate theories of social solidarity and political identity. We can explore this issue—if not meet all the desiderata of these questions—by probing further the link between urban social organization and our conceptions of public life.

As Alexis de Tocqueville (1840) long ago observed, state power may easily grow in the apparent service of an individualistic mass. Strong intermediate associations of various kinds are essential both to the protection of minority viewpoints from a tyranny of the majority and to creating the occasion for a diverse participation in public discourse. Though various voluntary organizations still thrive, cities have declined as bases for public discourse at an intermediate level, and government has largely abdicated the role of encouraging it in favor of relying on experts and public opinion polls. Likewise, modern mass communication media, especially broadcast media, tend not to nurture a role for such intermediate associations. They in many ways undermine political parties—for example, by focusing on the personalities of a few leaders rather than the program of the party as a whole and by insisting that public statements be made on a grab bag of specific issues as opposed to development of a coherent statement of a party’s overall position (Garnham 1986, p. 50; Calhoun 1988). Rather than creating spatially concentrated publics, they link individuals directly into a very large “super-public.” Within this large arena individuals can feel a sense of intimacy with public figures they have never seen in person, let alone met, but whose faces appear nightly in their living rooms and whose voices are as soothingly familiar as those of close friends. The broadcast media audience is extremely diverse, but these media do little to link members of the audience to one another.

The situation is, thus, different from that of urban newspapers in their heyday.<sup>12</sup> Where urban newspapers once informed and sometimes galvanized heterogeneous but spatially concentrated urban publics, broadcast media neither create nor serve particular publics in which directly interpersonal discourse readily shapes the social appropriation of news or other information. They are in too large a degree one-way means of communication; they reach people for the most part in spatially and socially dispersed, privatized settings. They provide an informational environment but do not foster public discourse.<sup>13</sup> A key question is whether computer-mediated communication will do this.

The gradual growth of newspapers was a major advance over word of mouth and an important response to the rising scale of social integration. Literacy was the key condition of access to print media. It was not simply offered by elites to the masses but was gained in a long struggle of both self-education and campaigns for state-supported schooling. This struggle was fought, in part, because people began to recognize themselves as members of large-scale, interlocking, constantly shifting, and expanding social systems. What went on in capital cities and great international markets was able—because of the integration of these economic and political systems—to have an almost immediate impact at home in a provincial town. Not only were members of local communities able to overcome their intellectual isolation, in other words, but they were *unable* to escape incorporation into emerging national and world systems. Literacy and eager pursuit of the news was a way to cope and a means for trying to maintain some capacity for action in the face of the enormous vulnerability to distant forces this transformation brought.<sup>14</sup> As Thompson (1968, p. 791) has noted, this struggle and the struggle over freedom of the press were struggles in large part to build and maintain a *public*.<sup>15</sup>

This form of public grew as an older one waned in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century cities. The older form of public was based on face-to-face communications and necessarily was more limited in scale (and thereby often more elitist). Such face-to-face publics formed amongst theater audiences, in coffee houses and pubs, and at various sorts of events from speeches to hangings (Sennett 1977; Hay 1975). The newspaper (and more generally print-based) public was not, especially in its earlier years, at odds with distinctive but face-to-face communication. On the contrary, newspapers were often read aloud in pubs and formed the basis for political and other discussions in a variety of settings. Tocqueville saw newspapers as the necessary means of coordinating action in large scale democracies:

In order that an association amongst a democratic people should have any power, it must be a numerous body. The persons of whom it is composed are therefore scattered over a wide extent, and each of them is detained in the place of his domicile by the narrowness of his income, or by the small unremitting exertions by which he earns it. Means then must be found to converse every day without seeing each other, and to take steps in common without having met. Thus hardly any democratic association can do without newspapers. (1840, p. 135)

But of course newspapers, like other media, may serve entertainment or other goals instead of or in addition to political information and mobilization. In the mid-nineteenth century lurid crime stories and other forms of apolitical news-as-entertainment began to predominate over politics in the popular press.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the growing importance of print media, eighteenth-century public life was built largely on the basis of direct relationships. The coffee house was a

paradigmatic locus for these relationships, bringing together people of differing social statuses, as both Habermas (1962 [1989]) and Richard Sennett (1977) have emphasized in their different accounts of public life. For Habermas, the key to the bourgeois public sphere was that people disregarded status differences, developing an early sort of “discourse ethic” which called on them to evaluate statements purely on their rational-empirical merits, not on the status of the speaker. Sennett, looking at much the same period and institutions stresses not the setting aside of status differences but a willingness to accept diversity as a normal and desirable feature of social life.

If community is not the same as public life, it may nonetheless be an important support for it. Strong communities provide people with bases for their participation in broader political discourse. They provide them with informal channels of information, chances to try out their ideas on friends and neighbors, and opportunities to hone their presentations of ideas and identities before they enter into the public sphere. Significant discourse about public issues takes place in settings that are not themselves altogether public and that tend to be circumscribed by the bounds of community—churches, PTAs, workplace cafeterias. We need to recognize the importance of intersections between the larger public discourses that are predominantly dependent on mass media in contemporary society and these smaller discourses on the boundaries between community and public life. These intersections are one of the crucial ways in which our separation into enclaves can be overcome.

Urban public life is challenged by the growth of cities (or, more precisely, urban areas) to a size and in a socio-spatial pattern that allow members of different constituent urban communities successfully to avoid direct relations with each other. While cities have always been fractionated by class, ethnicity, occupation, and other divisions, large scale has combined with urban sprawl and explicit development plans to allow much urban diversity to be masked. Elites are shielded from the poor, particularly, but a variety of middle- and working-class groups are able to go about their urban lives in an almost complete lack of urbane contact with and awareness of each other. Moreover, various traditional solidarities have been weakened, so that these groups are less and less frequently reproduced by the socialization of new members from within, as in ethnic ghettos. Increasingly they are enclaves of people who have made similar lifestyle choices. Both lifestyle enclaves and ethnic ghettos can be seen as bastions of community against the depersonalization and alienation of urban life. But to celebrate community should not mean to condemn contact with strangers. Yet, as Richard Sennett has argued, that is precisely what we tend to do. Cities draw together large numbers of people, most of whom must by definition be strangers to any individual.

To ease this strangerhood, you try to make intimate and local the scale of human experience—that is, you make local territory morally sacred. It is celebration of the ghetto.



Now precisely what gets lost in this celebration is the idea that people grow only by processes of encountering the unknown. (Sennett 1977, p. 295; see also Sennett 1970)

The effort to create sheltered communities often results in segregating residence from other urban functions. As Sennett (1977, p. 297) comments, drawing on the Jacobs's (1961) classic argument: "The atomizing of the city has put a practical end to an essential component of public space: the overlay of function in a single territory." More dramatic than any internal partitioning of cities is the functional segregation which takes place in the process of suburbanization and nonmetropolitan development. Suburban and exurban lifestyle enclaves are, however, among the most rapidly growing and economically thriving communities in America. New communications and transport technologies, from the automobile and the highway system to computers and the Internet, have fostered this kind of decentered development. This may not always be a necessary implication of the technology, but a matter of how it was used. Nonetheless, the result has been a combination of greater connection on a very large scale and division into small-scale enclaves which—whatever the character of their internal relations—have weak local connections to each other. Metaphors of community on a grand scale obscure this. As Castells (1996, p. 341) comments, "we are not living in a global village, but in customized cottages globally produced and locally distributed."

This compartmentalization of community life is antithetical to the social constitution of a vital public sphere. What made the eighteenth-century city so conducive to public discourse were the many sorts of public spaces in which people of different social identities were drawn into contact. These included the multifarious settings of artisan work, the coffeehouses that proliferated in London, Paris, and other major cities, churches (especially dissenting ones), markets of all sorts, the theater, various public festivals and governmental events from triumphal processions to trials and hangings. The industrial revolution, the rise of urban planning to serve values other than popular political participation, and the new technologies of transportation and communication all combined to make cities grow in size but lose their public spaces. As Mumford wrote two generations ago,

One of the difficulties in the way of political association is that we have not provided it with the necessary physical organs of existence: we have failed to provide the necessary sites, the necessary buildings, the necessary halls, rooms, meeting places: hence in big cities the saloon and the shabby district headquarters, open only to the more sedulous party members, have served. . . .

The town meeting of the New England political system had reality because it had dimensions and members: the citizens met face to face in a special building, the town hall: they saw and heard their fellow citizens, and they discussed problems relating to a unit immediately within their grasp and vision. But the peoples of the Western world have sought to live under an abstract and disembodied political democracy without giving its local units any other official organ than the polling booth. (1938, p. 483)

Cities are still the scene of a variety of social movements and political struggles. These include efforts to defend particular cultural groups and lifestyles and to achieve satisfactory levels of public services and amenities. Castells (1983) has offered perhaps the most comprehensive general assessment. But Castells is forced to conclude that these movements

are not agents of structural social change, but symptoms of resistance to the social domination even if, in their effort to resist, they do have major effects on cities and societies.

The reason for this defensive role is that they are unable to put forward any historically feasible project of economic production, communication, or government. (1983, p. 329)

Behind this incapacity lies, primarily, the mismatch of local scale to state- and international-level system integration.

The decline of urban public life is thus not solely a problem of city design. As Habermas, Giddens, and others have observed, the more fundamental issue is the rise of patterns of system integration that involve abstract media (paradigmatically money) and that are organized on a dramatically larger scale, overcoming to an enormous extent what Giddens (1981, 1985b) calls "time-space distanciation." Crucial to these are what I have termed "indirect social relations"—those which involve no physical copresence but instead exist only through the intermediation of information technology and/or bureaucratic organizations (Calhoun 1986; 1991). The city has been at once bypassed and internally reorganized by system integration. Most fundamentally, this has occurred through the development of the modern national state with its ability to monitor and govern far-flung activities, and the rise of corporate capitalism which combines the abstract totalization general to capitalist commodity production with the creation of economic bureaucracies endowed with the reified character of autonomous persons. Habermas has pointed out that even some of the problems of urban design can be traced to this growth of system integration:

In the characterless office buildings that dominate the town centers, in the banks and ministries, the law courts and corporate administrations, the publishing and printing houses, the private and public bureaucracies, one cannot recognize the functional relations whose point of intersection they form. The graphics of company trademarks and of neon-light advertisements demonstrate that differentiation must take place by means other than that of the formal language of architecture. Another indication that the urban habitat is increasingly being mediated by systemic relations, which cannot be given concrete form, is the failure of perhaps the most ambitious project of the New Architecture. To this day, it has not been possible to integrate social housing and factories within the city. The urban agglomerations have outgrown the old concept of the city that people so cherish. However, that is neither the failure of modern architecture, nor of any other architecture. (1975 [1985], p. 327)

In other words, not only are functions spatially separated, as Sennett (1977, p. 297) noted, but they are housed in structures which are largely spatially equivalent and therefore are distinguished semiotically only in arbitrary ways.<sup>17</sup>

A crucial challenge for democratic public life is finding ways to encourage mutual engagement simultaneously across significant differences of identity and interest, and across considerable social and spatial distances. This is somewhat obscured by the rhetorical move of attempting to ground democratic public life and the collective solidarity of very large-scale societies entirely through appeals to community. Though not equally characteristic of all contemporary "communitarians," this issue lies deeply enough in the rhetorical frame of that approach to touch virtually all versions of communitarianism.<sup>18</sup>

Community strength and local involvement, though powerful bases for mobilization, do not constitute adequate bases for democracy. Democracy must depend also on the kind of public life which historically has flourished in cities, not as the direct extension of communal bonds, but as the outgrowth of social practices which continually brought different sorts of people into contact with each other and which gave them adequate bases for understanding each other and managing boundary-crossing relations.<sup>19</sup> As important as community-based mobilizations are, they must be complemented by some sort of revival of public discourse and larger-scale organizations like political parties to support it (Calhoun 1988). This is in part a cultural issue, but one with crucial social structural foundations and one linked importantly to information technology.

Community life can be understood as the life people live in dense, multiplex, relatively autonomous networks of social relationships (Calhoun 1980; 1986). Community, thus, is not a place or simply a small-scale population aggregate, but a mode of relating, variable in extent. Though communities may be larger than the immediate personal networks of individuals, they can in principle be understood by an extension of the same lifeworld terms.<sup>20</sup> These terms become intuitive precisely within communities (including especially the family and other primarily relationships). Within a community, as within a kinship-based social organization, an unmet person need not be completely a stranger, for he or she can always be placed within an intuitive field, identified by a readily recognizable kind of relationship (a distant cousin, someone related by marriage to a friend, etc.). This is not equally true of people met from outside the communal field. While some direct relationships extend far afield, this happens usually with minimal density of network formation. Most understandings of strangers will be based not on ideas of the nature of their relationship to one, but on categorical identities: they are Blacks, Whites, rich, poor, Baptists, Jews, etc. These categories may imply certain modes of relating to people, but the abstract category takes precedence. Where no direct relationship is established, the abstract category dominates completely, often as a stereotype. In modern societies, most of the information we have about members of other communities, and in general about people different from ourselves, comes not through any direct relationships, even the casual ones formed constantly in urban streets and shops. Rather, it comes through the media.

Changing patterns of mediated communication thus combine with the increasing compartmentalization of community to produce a deterioration in public discourse. We are aware of others (a notable accomplishment of mass media, as classically of cities), but we are not in discourse with them. Not only do large-scale phenomena of modern markets, capitalist production organization, and the state all appear baffling when seen in terms of the ethical and sociological categories of the lifeworld. These systemic organizations, based on indirect social relationships, also minimize the frequency of public interaction among people different from one another. Intergroup relations are managed by formal organizations and mediated communications, not by direct personal contacts. The classic Frankfurt School point about how impoverished our cultural categories become, how poorly suited they are to critical recognition of basic social processes and alternatives, needs to be complemented by realization that reinvigoration of public culture would require a new set of social foundations for public discourse.

The Internet has facilitated an enormous increase in communication in a host of styles and on a host of topics. But where electronically mediated groups and networks are not supplements to those with strong face-to-face dimensions, they typically reach a category of people who share a common interest. These categories may be crosscutting, of course, as members of a discussion group on sex with animals may also join one on radical politics or postmodernist architecture. But the medium does not facilitate coming to know others in the multiplicity of their different identities so much as the segmentation of these different categories from each other. The Internet does encourage public discourse, though perhaps not so much as it facilitates entertainment, commerce, and work-related activity. But it is not at all obvious that it goes very far toward producing community in the sense of binding people to each other in dense, multiplex networks or toward meeting the challenge of providing a public realm in which members of different such communities—and a host of other groupings—engage with each across the boundaries of their differences and in terms of their different perspectives on the public good. Where the Internet is able to offer significant movement in these directions is most commonly where it supplements organizing work that also goes on face-to-face.

How and where this activism and organizing can connect to and influence powerful institutions remains a critical question. Globalization of finance markets is real, powerful, and dangerous; globalization of politics is not yet nearly so far advanced. There are no regulatory institutions up to the task of dealing with electronically mediated financial markets. So far as participatory politics is concerned, states remain the overwhelmingly most important arenas for democratic collective action. There are the beginnings of globally linked movements and media campaigns, but only the beginnings. Discourses reach across national borders, but not with a density of connections that facilitates much effective political action. Cyberdemocracy, in short, runs far behind cybercapitalism.

## ENDNOTES

An earlier version of this paper was presented to the American Sociological Association, New York, August 1996.

<sup>1</sup>Though by 1851 parts of the countryside would be more aroused; see Margadant 1979; Agulhon 1970.

<sup>2</sup>Of course, other factors were also important in limiting the scope of revolt in 1871—notably the Prussian Army.

<sup>3</sup>On other implications of the 1848 French revolution for social theory, see Calhoun (1989).

<sup>4</sup>Obviously there is a good deal of variation in the relationship between city and countryside, and in the level of national integration characteristics of Third World countries undergoing revolutions. I point here to a common pattern; I do not mean to suggest that it is the only one. Rural unrest and even peasant warfare do play substantial roles in Third World revolutions, and they played a not inconsiderable role in European ones (Skocpol 1978). Nonetheless, a high level of spatial immediacy and a very personal sort of conflict are common. A distinction needs to be kept clear between the role of rural strife in making it hard for a government to rule, and in recruiting participants to the revolutionary side in any ensuing civil war, and the urban focus of the actual toppling of government and institution of a new regime. In 1917 Russian infrastructural conditions approximated those of eighteenth-century- and early-nineteenth-century western Europe. Partly for this reason, even though peasant unrest contributed substantially to the weakness of the old regime, the revolution itself was made mainly in St. Petersburg. China's revolution of the late 1940s was indeed a matter of civil war in the countryside, but (unlike 1911) it was not primarily a matter of seizing effectively centralized power but of fighting a war over who would restore central power to a country in which effective national political institutions had long since been toppled by imperial collapse, invasion, and civil war.

<sup>5</sup>Lukacs (1921), Gramsci (1971); most of what Marx and Engels did have to say on communication has been usefully collected in de la Haye, ed. (1980).

<sup>6</sup>For Marcuse (1955, 1964) especially, these trends could also be analyzed psychologically in terms of a process of “desublimation” that left individuals focused on immediate pleasures, unable to distance themselves from the present and contemplate possible futures, and therefore incapable of critical thought. See also Horkheimer and Adorno's (1972) arguments on “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” including that “amusement itself becomes an ideal” and the specific significance of amusement is “to defend society” (pp. 143–44).

<sup>7</sup>Certainly Marx, Weber, and Simmel all at least touched on these issues, though they were not a central focus to any (Simmel's treatment of matters of scale being a partial exception). Urry (1985) makes a step in the right direction and discusses some other related efforts. A hint of some of this is offered in Lockwood's (1965) brief discussion of “system integration vs. social integration,” which uses the same terminology as Habermas's effort to conceptualize these sorts of issues, though their substantive theories overlap only slightly. There is also a considerable opening to the analysis of these issues in Giddens's (1985a) theory of structuration, though he has not addressed matters of infrastructure in a sustained way. See also Calhoun (1986, 1992).

<sup>8</sup>Among popular accounts of the rise of the new technology, Castells (1996) is considerably more attentive to historical background and comparison than most. See also Calhoun (1992).

<sup>9</sup>To his credit, Howard Rheingold (1993), the most prominent enthusiast for virtual community, sees much of this in his specific examples, though his overall vocabulary and presentation obscure distinctions between the meaning of the two senses of community.

<sup>10</sup>One factor in the popularity of cities is the extent to which effective, often computer-supported, transportation of physical goods has reduced the logistical attractions of the suburbs. One of the attractions of the suburbs has been that it was easier to get around for shopping, dealing with various bureaucracies, and performing similar daily chores. To the extent that such tasks are mediated by

computers, and supported by effective and rapid shipping systems, there may be less relative attraction to the car-friendly suburbs. As suburban malls challenged traditional urban downtown shopping areas, thus, ordering from catalogs and web pages may ironically facilitate a return to urban residence.

<sup>11</sup>Though he has not focused as much on the Internet as on other aspects of changing communications patterns, the work of Joshua Meyrowitz (1985, 1997) is of pioneering importance in this regard.

<sup>12</sup>Habermas describes the creation of the public sphere in terms of the promotion of many newspapers, each expressing specific interpretative orientations: "newspapers changed from mere institutions for the publication of news into bearers and leaders of public opinion—weapons of party politics" (1964, p. 53, quoting Karl Bucher). It was, indeed, the combination of editorial position with news reporting which dominated in the early growth of newspapers.

<sup>13</sup>Talk shows—more common and more local on radio than TV—are a partial counterexample to this. Many serve highly segmented audiences—as hooks (1993) has discussed with regard to Black women. But these audiences are still generally dispersed, not densely integrated networks. Broadcast media may be supplemented by face-to-face gatherings—like Star Trek weekends—but they remain primarily oriented to communication between centrally placed senders and dispersed audiences; call-in shows allow dispersed responses but for the most part not much lateral communication among the members of a public.

<sup>14</sup>Similarly, voting was a formal mechanism to allow influence over a representative government by those subject to its actions. Voting rights were hard-won in some cases, but often governments realized that giving votes gave popular groups a chance to voice their wants in ways elites could control. This, in turn, posed a problem for oppositional socialist or working-class organizations which were likely either to be drawn into a moderate government centered orbit or to be weakened by strict refusal to participate; see Katznelson and Zolberg 1986. By catering to those known wants at least to some extent, they could make strong government palatable and pacify large populations. It was much more important to keep civil peace when strikes or riots could unsettle a carefully integrated national or international system than it had been in the Middle Ages when most unrest had only local consequences.

<sup>15</sup>Habermas (1962 [1989], 1964 [1974]) also sees newspapers as central to the constitution of the classical bourgeois public sphere of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Habermas's attention is focused, however, on the tension between the essentially bourgeois nature of liberal notions of the public sphere such as were incorporated in the first modern constitutions and the growth of capitalism which undermined those institutions. He neglects the extent to which artisans and workers were able to develop significant capacities for public discourse.

<sup>16</sup>In his critique of the way in which an entertainment ethos destroys public discourse, Neil Postman (1986) exaggerates the extent to which the core issue is one of print culture versus visual and oral culture. Theatrical entertainments often occasioned public discourse in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, while newspapers could degenerate into the most debased forms of mere entertainment without public discourse (as a quick review of the tabloids at any American supermarket checkout counter will confirm today). Similarly, Anthony Smith suggests a plausible scenario for the future of journalism based on a radical split within the profession as it comes to serve two different sorts of audiences: "The new journalist will be either a technician of entertainment-news or a specialist with a loyalty to his subject matter resembling that of an academic rather than a spot-news reporter. A great division seems inevitable between these two groups: the one catering to a kind of information helotry, for whom the right to know has been subtly transmuted into the right to be entertained; the other catering to an enlarged class of well-informed people who have themselves acquired the ability to evaluate and handle sources and compare different versions of the same event" (1979, p. 206). Computer-assisted information media do indeed allow users to make their own selections among information without relying on editors to the degree contemporary newspaper readers must do. But

is this not rather like late Victorian and Edwardian England with its proliferation of penny dreadfuls and sensationalistic crime reporting for one part of the population and its nurturance not only of several great newspapers but of a number of the world's oldest surviving intellectual weeklies?

<sup>17</sup>Take for example Philip Johnson's Chippendale-inspired AT&T building in New York. It stood for the phone company only if one had previously been told that; it bore no functional connection. As a result, it could easily be sold to and iconically claimed by another corporation. This is largely because it houses generic office work, as do nearly all corporate office structures. Postmodernist decorative flourishes may distinguish office buildings from each other, but not in ways which challenge the basic modernist recognition of their functional equivalence.

<sup>18</sup>More prominent among political philosophers, communitarianism is best represented in sociology by Philip Selznick (1992) and Amitai Etzioni (e.g., 1997; see also his journal, *The Responsive Community*).

<sup>19</sup>A key to this, Sennett (1977) has argued, is the cultural availability of a differentiated panoply of social roles. One of the transformations of the modern era has been the destruction of our acceptance of more or less formal roles in favor of a demand for intimacy and immediacy in nearly all relationships. As a result, we are uneasy in any relationships with people basically different from us which cannot plausibly be handled on intimate or at least familiar terms, and we choose to avoid them or reduce their contents to mere banalities. We are apparently unable to endure significant differences of opinion with people not knit to us by strong social bonds. Public life must collapse under such circumstances.

<sup>20</sup>Communities need not be limited to spatially concentrated populations, as Webber (1963) observed years ago. Nonetheless, it is rare for any "community without propinquity" to exhibit a comparable multiplexity of relationships to a local community, even where its members are densely and systematically linked to one another, as in an academic field.

## REFERENCES

- Agulhon, Maurice. 1971. *La République au Village*. Paris: Plon.
- Calhoun, Craig. 1992. "The Infrastructure of Modernity: Indirect Relationships, Information Technology, and Social Integration." Pp. 205–36 in *Social Change and Modernity*, edited by H. Haferkamp and N. J. Smelser. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991. "Imagined Communities and Indirect Relationships: Large Scale Social Integration and the Transformation of Everyday Life." Pp. 95–120 in *Social Theory for a Changing Society*, edited by P. Bourdieu and J. S. Coleman. Boulder, CO: Westview Press and New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1989. "Classical Social Theory and the French Revolution of 1848." *Sociological Theory* 7(2):210–25.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1988. "Populist Politics, Communications Media, and Large Scale Social Integration." *Sociological Theory* 6(2):219–41.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1986. "Computer Technology, Large Scale Social Integration and the Local Community." *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 22(2):329–49.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1980. "Community: Toward a Variable Conception for Comparative Research." *Social History* 5(1):105–29.
- Castells, Manuel. 1996. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1983. *The City and the Grassroots*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Etzioni, Amitai. 1997. *The New Golden Rule*. New York: Basic Books.

- Garnham, Nicholas. 1986. "Media and the Public Sphere." In *Communicating Politics*, edited by P. Golding et al. Leicester: Leicester University Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1985a. *The Nation-State and Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1985b. *The Constitution of Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1981. *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. London: Macmillan.
- Gitlin, Todd. 1987. *The Sixties: Days of Hope, Days of Rage*. New York: Bantam.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Ed. and trans. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell. New York: International Publishers.
- de la Haye, Yves, ed. 1980. *Marx and Engels on the Means of Communication*. New York: International.
- Habermas, Jurgen. 1985. "Modern and Postmodern Architecture." In *Critical Theory and Public Life*, edited by Jay Forester. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. [1964] 1974. "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article." *New German Critique* 3:49–55.
- \_\_\_\_\_. [1962] 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Harvey, David. 1985. *Consciousness and the Urban Experience: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hay, Douglas, ed. 1975. *Albion's Fatal Tree*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- hooks, bell. 1993. *Sisters of the Yam*. Boston: South End Press.
- Hodgson, Godfrey. 1976. *America in Our Time*. New York: Vintage.
- Horkheimer, Max, and Theodore Adorno. 1972. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Jacobs, Jane. 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House.
- Katznelson, Ira, and Aristede Zolberg, eds. 1986. *Working-Class Formation: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Lockwood, David. 1965. "Social Integration and System Integration." Pp. 370–83 in *Social Change: Explorations, Diagnoses and Conjectures*, edited by G. K. Zollschan and W. Hirsch. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Lukacs, Georg. 1921. *History and Class Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One-Dimensional Man*. Boston: Beacon.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1955. *Eros and Civilization*. Boston: Beacon.
- Margadant, Ted. 1979. *French Peasants in Revolt: The Insurrection of 1851*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Meyrowitz, Joshua. 1997. "Shifting Worlds of Strangers: Medium Theory and Changes in 'Them' and 'Us.'" *Sociological Inquiry* 67:59–71.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1985. *No Sense of Place*. New York: Oxford.
- Mitchell, William J. 1995. *City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Mumford, Lewis. 1938. *The Culture of Cities*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Pfaff, Steven. 1996. "Collective Identity and Informal Groups in Revolutionary Mobilization: East Germany in 1989." *Social Forces* 75(1):91–118.
- Postman, Neil. 1986. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Viking.
- Rheingold, Howard. 1993. *The Virtual Community*. New York: Harper.
- Selznick, Philip. 1992. *The Moral Commonwealth*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sennett, Richard. 1977. *The Fall of Public Man*. New York: Knopf.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1970. *The Uses of Disorder*. New York: Knopf.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1978. *States and Social Revolutions*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, Anthony. 1979. *The Newspaper: An International History*. London: Thames and Hudson.



- Thompson, E. P. 1968. *The Making of the English Working Class*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- de Tocqueville, Alexis. 1971. *Recollections: The French Revolution of 1848*, ed. by J. P. Mayer and A. P. Kerr. New York: Doubleday Anchor.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1840, 1844. *Democracy in America*. New York: Schocken.
- Turkle, Sherry. 1995. *Life on the Screen*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Urry, John. 1985. "The Culture of Time and Space" in *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, edited by Derek Gregory and John Urry. New York: St. Martins.
- Webber, M. M. 1963. "Order in Diversity: Community without Propinquity." In *Cities and Space*, edited by L. Wirigo. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.