

The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School
College of Arts and Architecture

MASS-MINDED SYSTEMS: American Architecture and the Rise of Social Media

A Thesis in
Architecture
by Adam Longenbach

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Architecture

May 2011

The thesis of Adam Longenbach was
reviewed and approved* by the following:

Darla Lindberg
Associate Professor of Architecture
Thesis Adviser

Marcus Shaffer
Assistant Professor of Architecture

Larry Gorenflo
Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture

Sandra Staub
Associate Professor of Architecture
Head of the Graduate Program, Department of Architecture

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.

Abstract

The overlying goal of this thesis is to analyze the built environment as an embodiment of cultural paradigms from the Renaissance to today to demonstrate the frameworks that will shape social spaces in architecture in the future. In pursuit of this goal, this thesis elicits two central questions: What are the underlying social structures that necessitate the construction of a building, and once it is built, how does the building affect society in return? In exploration of these questions, this thesis hypothesizes the idea that *we are what we build*, and to a degree, *we become what we inhabit*. In this way, the built environment innately develops as a historical archive that is reflective of cultural values and developments in technology and industry as an embodiment of collective thought. As values, industry, technology and paradigms change, the built environment changes as well.

However, given the longevity of architecture, what is the relationship between the created built environment of one generation with the architecture and thought of subsequent generations? While all architecture chronicles cultural development at the moment of its construction, there are cases where architecture, through its longevity, also perpetuates the underlying social structures that necessitated its creation in the first place. Changes in the built environment resonate for generations, and If we are what we build, what is the affect of this architecture as a physical manifestation, and consequently a perpetuation, of antiquated collective thought?

Though this analysis may also hold true for other artistic disciplines of music, painting or sculpture, architecture is a composition to which society is inescapably subjected. In this context, architecture can be regarded as an institution - an influential body that implicitly affects

individual and collective thought and behavior. Such institutionalization of the built environment in the United States, its impact on the nation's social spaces, is the primary area of investigation for this thesis. Specifically, the architecture that evolved in the context of mass media and other mass-minded processes of mass production, mass dissemination, and mass marketing from their origination in the Renaissance Period to their current condition in the United States today, and the disparity between this architecture and emerging changes in media and collective thought.

While positive characteristics of affordability and accessibility can be attributed to these mass-minded processes, which the built environment would embody, there came also unintended, unforeseeable negative social consequences that built space would inevitably concretize as well. Mass media, as a by-product of these mass-minded processes, was selected as the area of investigation for analyzing the unintentional social consequences of these processes resulting from mass media's underlying and candid influence on individual and collective social behavior. The unfavorable social attributes of mass media are grounded in social isolation, encompassing qualities of segregation, homogeneity, and exclusivity - societal qualities that were recorded in architecture and are present in the current built environment.

An understanding of the social consequences of these mass-minded processes is possible only with the benefit of reflection on the evolution of these systems. A thorough analysis of their development provides a backdrop for understanding emerging changes in processes to become sustainably-minded, changes in media systems to become social media, and hypothesizing the underlying social influences

these structures will create. The positive qualities of social media are grounded in integration - human interaction, heterogeneity, and ritual - social qualities that are in contrast to the characteristics associated with mass media. In time, when the virtual environment of social media inevitably translates into the physical environment of architecture, the architectural embodiments of these media systems will conflict as well. This discordance is suggestive of the onset of a paradigm shift from isolation to integration, which provides an opportunity to explore the perpetuation of antiquated thought through the architecture of one generation as it lags the social progress of future generations. This exploration articulates the relationship between architecture and cultural for the purpose of conceptualizing an inevitable social-media architecture and anticipating abundantly-social built spaces in the future.

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Acknowledgments

The completion of this thesis is largely due to the encouragement and guidance of several individuals. I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Darla Lindberg, who I feel always knew the final direction of this thesis from the start, but was kind and patient enough through the last two years to allow me to arrive there myself. Thank you to my thesis committee, Marcus Shaffer and Larry Gorenflo, for taking an interest in my work and actively participating in the shaping of this research through critique and literature recommendations. Scott Wing, who served as an advisor in the early stages of this thesis as I researched non-profit organizations and humanitarian efforts. My parents, Eric and Lori Longenbach, for allowing me to arrive at this stage of academia by encouraging me to pursue my lifelong interests in architecture and design. Lastly, Paul M. Kossman and Joseph and Susan Paterno, whose endowments made possible the travel research necessary to carry out this thesis.

The information in this thesis stands on the shoulders of the research work of some outstanding theorists. The work of the following list of individuals proved invaluable as major contributors to the successful completion of this investigation. Regarding research on institutional behavior – Darla V. Lindberg, Associate Professor of Architecture at the Pennsylvania State University and the primary advisor to this thesis, and Elinor Ostrom's book *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Regarding historical context, case studies, and analysis of periodization – Larry Gorenflo, Anthropologist, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at The Pennsylvania State University and committee advisor to this thesis, John Besserman's book *The Challenge of Periodization: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*, and Brian Winston's book *Media Technology and*

Society. Regarding research and analysis of architecture and the built environment – Marcus Shaffer, Assistant Professor of Architecture at The Pennsylvania State University and committee advisor to this thesis, Denson Groenendaal, Instructor of Architecture at The Pennsylvania State University, Stewart Brand's book *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built*, and Lewis Mumford's books *Technics and Civilization* and *The City in History: Its origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*, Dhru A. Thadani's book *The Language of Towns and Cities*. Lastly, regarding media, technology, and social and community analysis – Douglas Rushkoff, both his book *Life Inc: How Corporatism Conquered the World, and How We Can Take It Back* and his speech at the 2009 Ofcom conference entitled *On Corporate History Since the Renaissance*, Robert D. Putnam's book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Jean Baudrillard's book *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, and Martin Heidegger's *Basic Writings*.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION



Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter one outlines the premise of the thesis including the language, terms, theories and other front matter necessary to appropriately communicate the thesis ideas. This chapter describes the organization of the subject matter by chapter and concludes by discussing the process and development of the thesis regarding its original theory, research and methodology, and final concepts and their significance and application to architecture.

1.1.0 Thesis Overview: Conceptual Theories

This thesis investigates the origination and evolution of mass and social media systems over the last half millennium as case studies to describe the relationship between collective thought and the built environment to better understand how one affects the other regarding the way humans interact. Exploration of this topic is divided into six areas of study - the cultural role of architecture and the built environment, mass media paradigms, the architecture of mass media paradigms, social media paradigms, the architecture of social media paradigms, and the significance of this subject matter to architecture. Each topic is outlined with the over-arching goal of describing the built environment's role as an embodiment of paradigms from era to era to better understand the relationship between the representative architecture of contiguous periods, and to better hypothesize the frameworks that will shape social spaces in architecture in the future. The six topics are assigned their own chapter, organized in the aforementioned order.

1.2.0 Central Themes: Definitions of Concepts

The following concepts are integral to the thesis – *periodization, institution, mass media, social media, paradigm, built environment, framework, and social presence*. The definition or explanation provided for each term elucidates its implied or intended meaning throughout the text.

1.2.1 Definition of Periodization

Periodization can be described as the affiliation of major cultural themes, philosophies, genres, etc. to an approximated length of time, which is often described by terms such as *era, epoch, age, period* and so on. Periodization is how we identify time periods by name such as *ancient history, the middle ages, modernity*, and so on. The dividing of time into periods provides a relatively objective standard by which to describe a specific time period based on the extent of a set of homogeneous characteristics.

It is necessary to understand that the process of periodization is a classification method based on a set of general descriptive principles correlative to a reasonably broad cross-section of related themes. The descriptive principles of periodization are not intended to be universal truths applicable to any single theme of a given period as noted by the widely-cited literary scholar, Frederic Jameson, who had this to say about periodization: “...[periodization] tends in spite of itself to give the impression of a facile totalization, a seamless web of phenomena each of which, in its own way, expresses some unified inner truth – a world-view or a period style or a set of structural categories which marks the whole length and breadth of the period in question” (Besserman 1996).

Regarding this thesis, references to or projections about periodization in the context of mass media and social media can also be understood as this form of abstraction described by Jameson and this definition.

1.2.2 Definition of Institution

An institution can be described as a system of established and embedded social rules that structure social interactions (Hodgson 2007). This thesis characterizes three institutions - mass media, social media, and the built environment. Mass media and social media being separate institutions that structure social interaction according to their respective deep-seated cultural processes of mass-minded systems. The built environment structures social interactions according to [but not limited to] the industry, technology, and paradigms that initially structured the design of the built space.

1.2.3 Definition of Mass Media

Mass Media is used as a loose term to describe forms of mass communication, typically mass marketing and mass advertising. Although the term *mass media* was not coined until the first quarter of the twentieth century, its origins date back hundreds of years prior to the Renaissance Period with the emergence of corporations and the mass-minded processes. Douglas Rushkoff, professor of Media Studies at the New School, defines mass media as a corporate marketing tool used to communicate the desired qualities of a product, brand or service to the public (Rushkoff 2009). Mass media has

become a term that encompasses all forms of mass communication – television, radio, newspaper, etc. – the ownership of which, in the United States, has been condensed to the control of only a small number of corporations today. The largest of these corporations are commonly referred to as *The Big Six*, otherwise known as the six largest media conglomerates in the United States including Time Warner, News Corporation, Viacom, Walt Disney, General Electric, and the CBS Corporation (FreePress.com 2009).

1.2.4 Definition of Social Media

Social Media is a relatively new term that was coined over the last two decades paralleling the emergence of the Internet. As the name suggests, the term social media is applied to media designed for human interaction through highly accessible means of technology. Originating from telecommunication development, the term has grown to include relatively new technology and media such as Internet forums, social networking websites, social gaming such as World of Warcraft or Second Life, blogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures, video, etc., where people are able to interact with one another regardless of physical proximity (Kaplan 2010).

1.2.5 Definition of Paradigm

Geoffrey Hodgson, professor of economic theory at the University of Hertfordshire, suggests that every individual is inevitably a product of the institutions existing during the time in which the individual lives

(Hodgson 2007). In the interest of this thesis, a paradigm can then be defined as the result of this institutional influence on collective thought to dictate the formation of ideas, actions, responses, etc., which are relatively homogeneous among individuals subject to the institution in a given period of time. The method of periodization identifies related paradigms as one example used to differentiate and categorize periods (Besserman 1996).

As previously mentioned, the intent of this thesis is to explore the relationship between a paradigm and the built environment in a given period to better understand the influence one has on the other. This thesis will identify and discuss two paradigms. The first is a social isolation paradigm that has developed alongside the evolution of mass media over the last five hundred years to become the cultural institution of mass media we know today. The second is a social integration paradigm resulting from an emerging social media institution over the last decade. The relevance of these two paradigms will be discussed in their effect in shaping the built environment according to the social structures of each media institution.

1.2.6 Definition of Built Environment

Like the common expression *we are what we eat*, when it comes to architecture, *we are what we build*. But how so? This thesis attempts to answer this question by exploring the cultural role of architecture and the built environment to better understand its bearing on society. The built environment is a broad term describing the designed surroundings that provide a setting for human activity. Although

built space is arguably created by the intention of the designer, this thesis investigates the underlying frameworks influencing the built environment to be designed with a bias toward the paradigms, industry, and technology of the period in which it was conceived. This thesis approaches this investigation in two ways. The first considers the influence of institutional paradigms on the conception of the built environment. The second considers certain components of that environment to be examples of an enduring institutions that lag society as their functional role in one period becomes obsolete in the next period, but the building remains as a burden on society. As Author Stuart Brand writes in his book *How Buildings Learn*: “*When we deal with buildings we deal with decisions taken long ago for remote reasons. We Argue with anonymous predecessors and lose*” (Brand 1994).

1.2.7 Definition of Framework

A framework can be described as the underlying structure that results from a paradigm of a particular institution. In general terms of this definition, an institution establishes a paradigm in collective thought, the paradigm establishes a framework as a result of carrying out an idea or action derived from the paradigm, the framework leads to the creation of a new institution, the new institution establishes a new paradigm, and so on. The framework discussed in this thesis is the architectural framework established from paradigms of media institutions, and how an architectural framework derived from the collective thought of one era can affect, or lag, the development of collective thought in the

following era (adapted from Besserman 1996).

1.2.8 Definition of Social Presence

Despite its semiotic understanding, the phrase *face-to-face interaction* has become a misnomer for describing physical human interaction. Social media technologies allow face-to-face interaction through video communication, but not in the understood, implicit definition of the phrase that assumes physical proximity. Instead this thesis uses the term *social presence* for the purpose of distinguishing between human interaction that takes place regardless of physical proximity and corporeal face-to-face human interaction that takes place in tangible space. The notion of social presence, where presence is defined as an object's or situation's tangibility, tactility, existence, proximity, physical intelligibility, suggests that no matter how engrossed in social media society becomes, we will always have a need for physical face-to-face human interaction, which can be fostered through architecture that is designed for the purpose of interacting.

1.3.0 Media and the Built Environment: Questions Investigated

The following is a list of important questions investigated in this thesis, organized according to the six chapters (six topics) this thesis will address.

CHAPTER TWO

Interpreting the Cultural Role of Architecture and the Built Environment:

What function or role do media and art play in influencing collective thought?

What is the cultural role of architecture - Art? Function? a Cultural chronicler? an Institution?

What is the relationship between architecture, industry, technology and the deep-seated paradigm of its time?

Can architecture lag society?

What can society learn from our need to continually retrofit the built environment?

CHAPTER THREE

Mass Media: The Social Isolation Paradigm:

What influence do mass-minded processes such as mass marketing, mass production, and mass dissemination have on social interaction?

How did these mass-minded processes lead to the formation of mass media?

How have deep-seated mass-minded processes, particularly mass media, unintentionally negatively shaped American social behavior?

CHAPTER FOUR

Interpreting Architectural Frameworks of Mass Media Paradigms: The Architecture of the Anti-Social:

How has architecture synced itself to mass-minded processes and mass media technology?

How has the institutionalization of mass media in social norms manifested itself in the built environment?

How does the built environment as an institution perpetuate this isolation brought about by a social isolation paradigm?

CHAPTER FIVE

Social Media: The Social Integration Paradigm:

What role could social media play in undermining the unintended negative social structures of mass media?

How is social media connecting people? What consequences could this have for the built environment, positive and negative?

CHAPTER SIX

Theorizing Architectural Frameworks of Social Media Paradigms: The Architecture of the Social:

Just as architecture synced to deep-seated mass-minded processes and mass media technology, what is the architecture that will emerge as a result of a synchronization to mass communication and the social integration paradigm?

What role will architecture play in grounding the social integration paradigm in the physical?

How will the built environment adapt from it's anti-social condition, be retrofitted for sociability, and what new building typologies will emerge as anti-social typologies become obsolete?

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions:

What can the role of architecture become?

What does a social architecture entail, what is its relationship to sustainability?

Are we what we build, what does this mean for how we approach the design of architecture?

How can architecture lag society, and how might we approach building design?

1.4.0 Research Intent: Objectives of Investigation

The inspiration for this thesis was to create an argument for the necessity of architecture based on the hypothesis that people have an inherent need for face-to-face interaction that social media and *place-less* interaction cannot replace. The initial case study investigated the architecture that would result from a synthesis of face-to-face human interaction with the digital interaction of social media with the intent to propose a new, emerging building typology in the future. In pursuit of this idea, the thesis adapted to the current investigation as research on the topics of mass media and social media revealed that the initial assumptions about social media were too quickly conceived as part of a popular reluctance toward this growing technology.

Subsequently, the research expanded to include a more comprehensive time line depicting mass media and social media from the bottom up – from their origination to present day, in order to understand their place in the larger context of periodization, architecture, and change in collective thought. The research focused on an interpretation of the zeitgeist of the period in which mass media developed in relation to the advancement of the built environment during that same period. The findings on mass media were compared to the narrow glimpse available of the zeitgeist of the last decade in which social media has developed. The thesis can only hypothesize the impact social media would have on the built environment in the future as investigated in the original case study. In contrast to the original speculations made about social media, the findings of this research depict social media as a catalyst for positive social change, where as the negative characteristics of social media can be attributed to the lingering influences from an institutionalization of mass media in contemporary culture. An investigation of the cultural role of media, art, and architecture relative

to the era in which mass media developed creates a backdrop for hypothesizing the cultural role of social media and the architecture that develops from its influence.

1.5.0 Research Methodology

The following list describes the research process undertaken for this thesis including areas of data collection and field study. Reference the end matter of this thesis for the bibliography and references used for data collection.

- + Research on the history and development of mass media and social media systems relative to architectural and philosophical development as relevant to the built environment (see bibliography for relevant sources).

- + Gather statistical data on the growth of social media economically, number of users, public engagement with social media, etc., paralleling changes in the built environment (see bibliography for relevant sources).

- + Gather statistical data on mass media regarding economic growth and public engagement with mass media technologies paralleling changes in the built environment (see bibliography for relevant sources).

- + Research on the uses of public spaces historically and presently by studying the work Setha Low, writer of *On the Plaza*, Lewis Mumford's *The City in History*, Stewart Brand's *How Buildings Learn*, etc.

- + Field research: site visits to existing buildings which have been translated from the non-space of the Internet to the built environment such as the Facebook Headquarters and the Googleplex in Palo Alto, California.

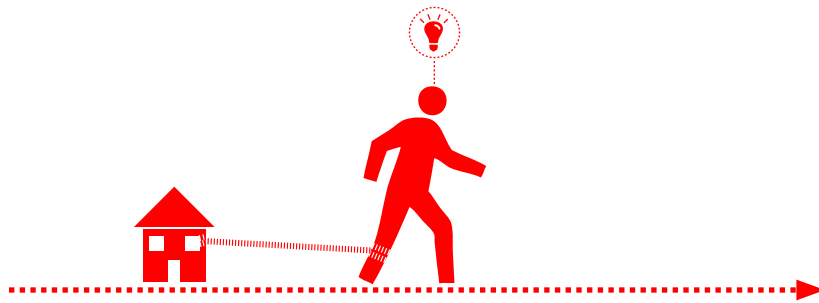
- + Field research: site visits to various urban public social spaces

developed during the mass media era in cities across the United States and North America including Chicago, Illinois; New York, New York; Palo Alto, California; Portland, Oregon; San Francisco, California; Seattle, Washington; and Vancouver, British Columbia.

+ Research on current and future uses of digital media and electronic space in architecture to develop ideas of how social media may be integrated into the design of future public spaces and public architecture (see bibliography for relevant sources).

CHAPTER TWO

INTERPRETING THE CULTURAL ROLE OF
ARCHITECTURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT



Chapter Two: Interpreting the Cultural Role of Architecture

What is the role of architecture in society? Is it to be functional? A service? An art? What becomes of architecture that fails to fulfill any of these needs? What roles have architecture and the profession forfeited over time, maintained, or what has it gained? Chapter two is a critique of the cultural significance of architecture and the profession regarding the evolution of the trade paralleling the development of media, art and society. This chapter lays the foundation for the rest of the thesis to identify a selection of institutions that have regulated the social function of architecture and the built environment historically and in contemporary society. Once identified, the remainder of the thesis elaborates on the relationship between these institutions and the built environment as a manifesto advocating for an uprooting of the profession from its current condition in favor of a proposed new direction of embodied sociability and adaptability in the built environment. Chapter two begins with an examination of the relationship between media, art and culture to establish a context for analyzing their relationship to architecture.

2.1.0 The Cultural Role of Media and Art

What is the function of media and art in society, and what are the consequences resulting from the fulfillment of that function? This thesis will look at the role of media and art from the position of public consumption and inevitable subjection in a media saturated environment. The following section explores the social consequences of media and art as discussed in the work of Jean Baudrillard and Martin Heidegger to establish a setting for discussing the cultural role of architecture. The concepts discussed in this section - anachronistic resurrection, cultural consumption, and cultural recycling are integral to the entire investigation of this thesis.

2.1.1 Media and Society: Anachronistic Resurrection and Cultural Consumption

Jean Baudrillard, a notable cultural theorist of the late twentieth century to early twenty-first century, scrupulously investigated the relationship between media consumption and the collective conscious through the concept of *anachronistic resurrection*. Anachronistic resurrection suggests that certain events occur twice throughout history – the first occurs with genuine historical importance, the second occurs only as a caricature of the first; a bastardization of a culturally significant event or ritual (Baudrillard 1998). Cultural theorist and colleague of the late Baudrillard, Slovenian Žižek, describes this resurrection with the expression *first as tragedy, then as farce*, which intimates the debasement of an event by its successor (Žižek 2009). Similar to Žižek's definition, Baudrillard expands the term to describe the concept of cultural consumption: "*the time and place of the caricature resurrection, the parodic evocation of what already no longer exists* –

*of what is not so much consumed as consummate" (completed, past and gone) (Baudrillard 1998). Tourism is one example of anachronistic resurrection through cultural consumption – the intent to consume a significant event through its forcible recreation. Williamsburg, Virginia, a popular tourist attraction because of its fictionalized recreation of colonial life, war reenactments, or as Baudrillard cites, the tourists who journey by coach to the far north, hiring Eskimo tunics and supplies to re-enact the gold rush – these are all examples of cultural consumption by anachronistic resurrection (Baudrillard 1998). Paralleling these examples, regarding this thesis, is the applicability of consumption and resurrection to mass media influence on society, which Baudrillard refers to as *mass media culture*.*

The front matter of this thesis provided the relevant definition of periodization as *the affiliation of major cultural themes, philosophies, genres, etc. to an approximated length of time, which is often described by terms such as era, epoch, age, period and so on. Periodization is how we identify time periods by name such as ancient history, the middle ages, modernity, and so on. The dividing of time into periods provides a relatively objective standard by which to describe a specific time period based on the extent of a set of homogeneous characteristics. It is necessary to understand that the process of periodization is a classification method based on a set of general descriptive principles correlative to a reasonably broad cross-section of related themes* (section 1.2.1 Definition of Periodization). We see periodization as a tool - a macro-scale record of numerous relatable cultural events or rituals, such as the arts, over an extended period of time. On the other hand, contemporary media systems can be described on similar terms but as a micro-scale record of a single cultural event – this

chronicling of day-to-day culture measures the gradual advancement of collective-thought while periodization summarizes the totality of its progress (with the cause of cultural advancement being discussed in *section 2.1.3*). In an abstract sense, periodization is an aggregation of the media, so the media not only chronicles cultural but shapes and influences it.

The relationship between media and society brings back the topic of anachronistic resurrection as media content also occurs twice - first is the event, which the media consumes, second is the perversion of the event by public consumption of the media. The perversion occurs in two ways. The media misrepresents the event for personal gain as evident in instances of fear mongering, speculation, personal bias, etc. Second is the misinterpretation of the event or misinformed reaction to the event by the public from media consumption. Baudrillard discusses media influence on society through the lens of cultural consumption and anachronistic resurrection as follows: *"We have already seen how, through mass communications, the pathetic hypocrisy of the minor news item heightens with all the signs of catastrophe (deaths, murders, rapes, revolution) the tranquility of daily life. But this same pathetic redundancy of signs is visible everywhere: the glorification of the very young and the very old, the front-page treatment for blue-blood weddings, the mass-media hymning of the body and sexuality, everywhere we see the historical disintegration of certain structures celebrating, as it were, under the sign of consumption, both their real appearance and their caricatural resurrection. The family is dissolving? It is glorified. Children aren't children any more? Childhood is turned into something sacred. The old are alone, sidelined? A collective show of sympathy for the aged. And, even more clearly, the body is glorified*

precisely as its real possibilities are atrophying and it is increasingly harassed by the system of urban, professional and bureaucratic control and constraints” (Baudrillard 1998). Here, Baudrillard exposes the disparity between the reality of an event and its distorted replication the media diffuses to the public. In an abstract sense, the media controls *the real* because *the real* can be manipulated as the media sees fit to broadcast (Baudrillard 1998). This is certainly not to suggest that the public is at the mercy of the media, following it like mindless drones, but that media has become a cultural leech – an institution that both moves with society while covertly governing some of its movement.

2.1.2 Media: Cultural Recycling and Cultural Homogenization

This leech-behavior has become self-evident in contemporary mainstream mass media where media outlets are publicly branded by their implicit biases. The danger of having so few media outlets, generally speaking there are only six primary media conglomerates, is the reduction of real content expressed through a limited number of perspectives resulting in situations of large-scale cultural homogenization - a collective sameness that permeates society (The Center for Public Integrity 2010). Baudrillard describes the consequences of cultural homogeneity with the term *le recyclage*, or *cultural recycling*, which describes the individual's need to continually reinvent and *update* the self, similar to the American expression of *keeping up with the Joneses*. The act of cultural recycling is self-evident in the consumer society – the need to maintain oneself through possessions and appearance at the speed of the yearly, monthly, or

weekly bias. Similarly is the need to be cultured – to willingly seek to consume culture to be *in the know* or up-to-date on current available knowledge. Mass media as an information resource coupled with consumer product advertising has developed a perfect niche for subsisting off of this cultural recycling process – a process media assisted in creating in the first place.

The media and the advertisements continually change – new products, new brands, new trends, and so on. The mass consumption and re-consumption of these constantly renewed advertisements and media content raises two primary concerns. The first resides in the cultural consequences of the media's constantly changing condition as it results in rapid social changes. Cultural itself becomes a temporary object, it is no longer made to last or develop over time but only to emerge and re-emerge perpetually for the purpose of being consumed. The second consequence brings us back to the aforementioned concept of cultural homogeneity, or the escalation of popular culture, which is the paring down of a society to a collective oneness prescribed by media and consumerism. The consumption of media presents a risk of sacrificing a degree of autonomy. The result is a monotonous society with suppressed imagination, ritual, place, etc. – the integral components to cultivating meaningful and enduring culture. The collection of socially uniform, socially isolated individuals is the created and the targeted *mass* of mass media, which again, Baudrillard has deemed the *mass media culture* (Baudrillard 1998).

2.1.3 Cultural Banality and the Necessity of Art

The previous section described mass media in two ways – the first as a cultural chronicler of everyday events, the second as an influential component on the collective response to those events as it results in cultural homogeneity. These two descriptions of mass media provide a context for discussing the relationship between art and mass media culture in this section.

“Poetry is indispensable – if I only knew what for.” In his book *The Necessity of Art*, Ernst Fischer describes this quote from Jean Cocteau as the paradoxical summary of the importance of art. The quote intimates that an individual’s relationship with poetry or art is irreplaceable, its indispensability is personally and subjectively perceived but not necessarily capable of being or needed to be expressed (Fischer 1963). A clearer meaning of this indispensability comes from examining the idea in the context of a larger social scale outside of the individual such as art in the context of mass media culture. The previous section partly defined mass media through social monotony - it is an advocate of social uniformity and an obstruction to enduring cultural development. This defines the role of art to be an opposition to mass media culture as uniformity has little value in art beyond being a topic for artistic reaction or interpretation. Author Arthur Clutton-Brock describes the role of art as an opposition to cultural banality as he has quoted: *“Our real sin is not wickedness, but something less dignified and exciting, for which I know no word except the half-French one, banality. Commonplaceness is clumsy and also less expressive of the exasperation which the French, perhaps, feel more than we do against the commonplace, against sameness where things ought not to be the same. Banality is a word then for sameness where it ought not to be,*

that is to say in things of the mind. There is a sameness of nature that does not weary us, innumerable blades of grass, or the sun rising every morning; but human sameness is wearisome because the very virtue of human activities, whether moral, intellectual, or aesthetic, is in differentiation. When men all think alike, they are not thinking at all; when they will alike, they are not willing at all; and common form in art is failure" (Clutton-Brock 1924). Inculcated homogenization through media and consumer culture deprives individuals of a possibility to cultivate individuality and autonomy, which art seeks to restore in both the person and the built environment. That is not to say that anyone should seek differentiation for the sake of being different, but that this is certainly a more productive aspiration than seeking uniformity for the sake of uniformity, as Clutton-Brock writes: "*To aim at sameness is to aim at what you are to start with, as if you said 'I will go where I am'... it is a submission of the mind*" (Clutton-Brock 1924). The purpose of art is not to strive for its characteristics of individuality, as this is only a symptom of the arts greater intention. That is to say, the art itself does not necessarily seek individuality and it does not necessarily seek to oppose banality, but that these qualities are the by-products of the artist's intended purpose for creating a piece of art initially. However, regardless of the purpose of the art, its consequences of individuality or inspiration or something else are conditional to the perception of the individual.

Martin Heidegger helps periodize art with media and architecture as he ascribes the purpose of art to be a cultural thrust forward. Heidegger describes the ability of art to *break open an open place*, to either intentionally confront the existing governing structures of society such as mass media, or to inevitably precipitate a collective realization or

awareness about those structures as a consequence of the art. With this interpretation, art can be described as the creation of new structures - a *ground-laying of grounding*, as Heidegger puts it: “...[art] *never takes its gift from the ordinary or traditional. Yet it never comes from nothing in that what is projected by it is only the withheld determination of historical dasein itself*” (Heidegger 2008). The structural resistance of art allows it to be an agent of change - it becomes a new *beginning* and a social resetting. Heidegger describes art as *beginning* to be a *leap* or a *head start* in that everything the future holds for society has already been leapt over - *The beginning already contains the end latent within itself* - but the end is veiled from the present (Heidegger 2008). Art as beginning prescribes an end; an ideal to which society aspires. Art is the catalyst for progressing society from its governing structures, from banality to something new (Clutton-Brock 1924). Heidegger describes this collective movement as follows: “*Whenever art happens - that is, whenever there is a beginning - a thrust enters history; history either begins or starts over again. History here means not a sequence in time of events, of whatever sort, however important. History is the transporting of people in its appointed task as entry into that people’s endowment. ...We inquire into the essence of art. Why do we inquire in this way? We inquire in this way in order to be able to ask more properly whether art is or is not an origin in our historical existence, whether and under what conditions it can and must be an origin*” (Heidegger 2008).

In Section 2.1.1 *Media and Society: Anachronistic Resurrection and Cultural Consumption*, media is described as a chronicler of day-to-day culture measuring the gradual advancement of collective thought while periodization summarizes the totality of cultural progress. Art as

2.2.0 Identifying the Cultural Role of the Built Environment: Can Architecture Lag Society?

In 1924, Winston Churchill was famously quoted in his address to British architects at an awards ceremony to the Architectural Association when he said: *“There is no doubt whatever about the influence of architecture and structure upon human character and action. We make our buildings and afterwards they make us. They regulate the course of our lives.”* Churchill rewords this statement in 1943 in an address to the British Parliament - *“We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us”* (Brand 1994). Appending this quote fifty years later, author Steward Brand writes in his book *How Buildings Learn*: *“We shape our buildings, then they shape us, then we shape them again – ad infinitum. Function reforms form, perpetually”* (Brand 1994). Both quotations speak to the intimate relationship we share with the built environment through a reciprocal dependency. Like the common saying *you are what you eat*, in essence *we are what we build*. But how so?

Before answering the question of architecture's role in society there are several other issues that need to be addressed. The first step is to properly dissect that which constitutes architecture. Is it functional? A service? An art? These are questions that could easily expand into theses themselves, but abbreviated conclusions can be drawn based on the information already discussed in this thesis. However, just as the term *periodization* is described as a general classification method despite giving the impression of a concrete totalization, addressing these questions comes from a broad cross-section of architecture and should be understood with this idea of generalized classification as well.

2.2.1 Architecture is Art?

In *Section 2.1.3 Cultural Banality and the Necessity of Art*, Heidegger and Clutton-Brock defined art similarly as *truth* and *beginning*, a means to a cultural thrust forward, and an end to *cultural banality*, a relief from social uniformity, respectively. Both theorists conclude that to shape these social consequences, art must be divorced from the ordinary and traditional to become something new entirely (Heidegger 2008, Clutton-Brock 1924). Art achieves this *newness* through radicalism and experimentation, and in this way, art is inherently non-utilitarian. Can the same be said for architecture? Yes and no, and there are two reasons for this ambiguity.

The first reason largely hinged on technology, as major changes in architecture often do, and the technology in this case was the mass production of paper (a technology that would also develop mass media to be discussed in chapter three). During the Renaissance in the fifteenth century, the increasing availability of paper elevated architecture from a guild practice to an art. Experimentation through drawing became possible, and architecture could be explored through new ideas rather than transferring established ones (Wigley 1998). Any ad-hoc nature of architecture now took place more so on paper than in practice, and so as art in process, architecture moved from sculpture-like to resemble more so the process of painting. Architecture as drawing exploration and drawing experimentation developed in to a larger role of art, but not fully, as architecture could not completely devote itself to artistry because of a long-standing and essential tie to functionality. Neither entirely art or functionality, Architecture found itself in limbo

between the two. Author Mark Wigley notes the interconnectivity of architecture, art and functionality in his book *The Activist Drawing* when he writes: “...Architecture was rarely considered as the peak of the arts in the subsequent centuries. It never fully escaped its association with the practicality of building, the burden of function. The techniques that established the architect as an artist evolved in parallel to those who aspired to minimize and safely transfer the sketched idea through to the final building. All the teaching and drawing whose function was to transform the physical world kept architecture at the threshold of the academy...Drawing elevated architecture, but only so far “(Wigley 1998). Architecture does not simply become what it wishes to become - a wall must provide functional value beyond its art-purpose as boundary and place, a roof must shed water before precipitating inspiration, a space must consider quality and comfort in priority over the architectural idea - there are underlying rules of functionality to which architecture must adhere. This is not to suggest that functionality is a burden on architecture. Functionality is the nucleus of the trade. However, the consideration architecture must give to these pragmatic needs calls in to question the appropriateness of identifying architecture as a complete art.

Secondly, while the availability of paper expanded architecture's role in the arts, new limitations evolved to mitigate that progress. As the arts maintained an affinity for radicalism and originality, architecture, however detailed or ambitious it appears, must abide by a certain regiment of regulated conservatism. Regulations of codes, zoning, associations, and certifications burden all aspects of the profession both in academia and practice (Brand 1994). Although both art and architecture, artist and architect, are subject to institutionalized social

structures (i.e. mass media), the artist and the artist's work are largely unfettered relative to the architect and his or her architecture, both of which are accountable to multiple constraints. While artists openly create, architects are regulated by educational requirements, processes, and associations. While art is openly expressive and experimental, architecture is regulated by a hierarchy of codes, zoning constraints, permits, economics and politics. There are more than forty-four thousand code-enforcement associations in the United States alone. Moreover, building codes are a set of minimum standards. Adherence to a minimum breeds mediocrity, minimalism, and limits extraordinary (Brand 1994). The question is not whether these regulating institutions are or are not warranted, the question is because of these regulations is it appropriate to characterize architecture as an art. This is not to say that architecture has become art-less, but that it represents a lesser degree of art. In fact, architects like Bernard Tschumi may argue that functionality and regulation create an enigma from which art must be deciphered. It is a different degree of art and a different degree of function.

Lastly, architecture struggles as art because the architect, more so than artists of other disciplines, is largely dependent on a patron to pursue work. Built architecture requires the provisions of a client in funding and a building site. The financial constraints and desires of the client can cease the art-purpose of architecture, and understandably so. This is not to say that the architect should not fully heed the will of the client, the architect certainly should, but again, because of that external influence, to what extent does architecture merit description as art. Unlike other creative disciplines of painting, poetry, sculpture, and philosophy, architecture has a greater commitment to regulations,

economics, patrons, and function. Architecture is noncommittal - it has developed to become the nexus of art, function and technology, but remains fully devoted to none of them as each casts limitations on the other, and regulation exacerbates those limits.

2.2.2 Architecture is Function?

A building is typically designed with a specific purpose in mind. The architect caters the building's function, spaces, materials, etc. to a set of needs that are pre-determined by the client. As Louis Sullivan was famously quoted in 1986 - *form follows function* - the client describes the function for the building, and the architect ascribes a building form that responds to that function. A school building designed to foster learning, a church designed to foster spirituality, a home designed to foster kinship - these are a few of an infinite number of examples of a form-follows-function design response.

The concept sounds rather ingenious in theory, but however popular this adage became, it is also quite misleading to employ architects to believe either they or their clients are capable of anticipating function. It's a rather impossible task, yet the entire building industry, the legal design and construction process, financing, and the resulting architecture itself is biased toward the architect being able to make such anticipations. At the end of the design process a building is "finished," as if a building is ever truly complete, but it will be constructed with the feeling of permanence, as if a building is ever truly permanent (Brand 1994). Stuart Brand noted this process when he wrote: "*Between the world and our idea of the world is a fascinating*

kink. Architecture, we imagine, is permanent. And so our buildings thwart us. Because they discount time. They misuse time. Almost no buildings adapt well. They're designed not to adapt; also budgeted and financed not to, constructed not to, administered not to, maintained not to, regulated and taxed not to, even remodeled not to. But all buildings (except monuments) adapt anyway, however poorly, because the usages in and around them are changing constantly. ...The race for finality undermines the whole process. In reality, finishing is never finished, but the building is designed and constructed with fiendish thoroughness to deny that. The occupants are supposed to march in and gratefully do exactly what it was declared they would do two years before, during the design state, and the building will punish them if they don't" (Brand 1994). Society is subject to the spaces it creates and re-creates, as this section earlier stated, we are what we build. In consideration of mass media consequences of cultural consumption, it comes as no surprise then that the building remodeling, renovation and rehabilitation industry is booming. In 1989, over two hundred billion dollars were spent on building renovations and forty billion dollars were spent on historic preservation (Brand 1994).

A prolific example of the inflexibility and non-functionality of a building is found in the library typology, where architecture as a structure of permanence meets a need for potentially infinite growth. Brand cites the United States Library of Congress as an example, which was said to have spaces never capable of being filled when it was designed in 1897. To the contrary, in the time leading up to today it has received two additions as well as multiple warehouses for off-site storage (Brand 1994). Examples of this inhibited functionality can be found in any building typology exposing a difficult question for any

architect - how does one account for the contraction and expansion of a building? Answering this question is a labor in itself and a tangent to this thesis, but *Chapter Twelve Built for Change* in Stuart Brand's book *How Buildings Learn* and Mark Wigley's critique of Constant's New Babylon in *The Activist Drawing* address this question quite well as a start.

As discussed of architecture's role as an art - that architecture is no more art than it is art-less, this section is not proposing that architecture is functionless as well. More so, that the architect's and the architecture's obligation to regulations, economics, patrons, and in some cases art, have cornered the profession in to fulfilling an insufficient degree of functionality. The need to design a building in accordance to the bias of the patron largely divorces the architect from opportunities to consider future inhabitants. An architecture designed for immediate consumption will forfeit future function.



figure 2.2 The Congressional Library was said to be impossible to fill and thwarted adaptability, but in its over 100 years, has had two additions and required several warehouses for off-site storage (Congressional Library 2011)

What can be said of the functionality of architecture is the need for time, adaptability, and feedback loops from users, but the current practice confounds these needs, as do the buildings it produces. This short-term thinking is at odds with the longevity of the built environment. Although the intention of *form-follows-function* may be ideal, the reality of designing without adaptability evolves to become *form-dictates-function*. So what can be said about architecture as function is that without systems of adaptability in place from the beginning, a building is doomed to become an obsolete monument to its original intention and potentially a burden on society. As Brand quotes - *Function reforms form, perpetually*, but what becomes of buildings that fail to evolve is the topic of discussion in the next section.

2.2.3 Architecture is a Cultural Chronicler?

So far in this effort to describe the cultural role of the built environment the exploration has revealed an indeterminacy of architecture, which defines both the beauty and the plight of the discipline. There is potential for architecture to be art, but an obligation to function and enforced regulations restrict an artistic role. There is potential for architecture to be functional, but short-term thinking between architect and patron, funding, and artistic aspirations often limit its functionality. So architecture is a crossroads of each area, equally weighing their contribution in the design of the building. But what is to be said for the majority of the built environment that does not achieve a societal purpose of being either art or function? What is the role of buildings that are incapable of adapting and fail to evolve? Often the answer is

simple - and it brings architecture into the topic of cultural consumption - buildings are demolished and replaced by other buildings. Like the fashion of the season, the buildings are designed with short-term thinking in the mode of the time. Materials, skins, form, and function designed for a trend grow to become embarrassingly out of date, and these buildings are torn down and replaced in a seemingly perpetual cycle of consumption (Baudrillard 1998, Brand 1994).

However, there is an alternative outcome for buildings in search of purpose that can occur regardless of the building's ability to adapt. Some buildings determine their cultural role by taking on another characteristic - *age*. Age is the only way for buildings to acquire an internal and external complexity of character through patinas, stains, and wear that garners public respect. As Stuart Brand writes: "*Age is so valued that in America it is far more often fake than real. In a pub-style bar and restaurant you find British antique oak wall paneling - perfectly replicated in high-density polyurethane. On the roof are fiber-cement shingles molded and colored to look like worn natural slate...The widespread fakery makes us respect honest aging all the more*" (Brand 1994). But just as new buildings are often forged to appear aged or designed to ripen quickly, there is a noticeable limit by which age is admired in older buildings. Aged buildings are restored to maintain function and aesthetic, but not too restored that it loses character.

Think of the time and revenue that goes into preserving ancient buildings. For example, the Colosseum, one of Rome, Italy's most emblematic buildings at nearly two thousand years of age, has an annual preservation and restoration budget of eight hundred and

sixty-seven thousand dollars, and this is just one of a multitude of preservation pieces in the over two and a half thousand year old city (Rogueclassicism.com 2010). Like the Colosseum, when a building spans multiple periods it takes on a greater responsibility as the architecture itself becomes a documentation of the past (Brand 1994). Every chip, crack, wear, patina, addition, and restoration is a physical expression, a language descriptive of an ongoing anthropological archive. In some cases, such as the institutional building typology, the original intent for the building forgoes aspirations of art and functionality for timelessness. In other cases, the building abandons adaptability and surrenders to monumentality. As with the Colosseum, it becomes a corpse emblematic of the period of history in which it lived. This thesis refers to this role of architecture as a *cultural chronicler* - buildings as an embodiment of the evolution of collective thought. The cultural value of such buildings is so well esteemed that sacrifices of time and resources are willingly made to preserve them, but what is the result of buildings that fail to adapt, and fail to assimilate a cultural narrative? Treating such architecture through renovation, reclamation or demolition is equally a drain on resources, and such buildings endure because of an unwillingness to deal with its burdensome qualities. They become lagging institutions of society in the built environment.



figure 2.3 The nearly two-thousand year old Colosseum epitomizes architecture as art, function, a cultural chronicler and now an institution (Longenbach 2009).

2.2.4 Architecture is an Institution.

The Colosseum, like any ancient building, assumes a rather extraordinary case study, and it's important to note that cultural chronicling occurs in varying degrees of time at various scales of any building typology or space. Arguably, in the context of pop culture or

otherwise, cultural chronicling begins the instant a building is complete. All buildings share some degree of a narrative, but not all narratives prove worthy of preserving. When a building abandons adaptability, that is to say when society abandons the building, it ceases to live, but the corpse remains. With the corpse society struggles to eke out a function. This is true of the Colosseum, which now operates primarily as a tourist attraction, and people come from all over the world to explore its bones, but the Colosseum is willingly preserved. So what of this concept applies to contemporary architecture and the built environment society is subject to today? Obviously not every building is *the colosseum* per say, yet multitudes of far less notable buildings, every-day buildings, exist beyond their living stage and society is forced to weather this reality of the built environment. These components of the built environment remain for several reasons: Economically, the cost of resources is too great to replace or reclaim the buildings or the space; functionally, the actual act of replacing would cause too large of a disruption in the surrounding social fabric (i.e. the loss of jobs, infrastructure, urban circulation, etc.); edification, they provide a backdrop for more notable buildings, and ignorance, refusing to believe there is an issue in the built environment to be dealt with. *Figure 2.4* is a diagram representing the longevity of architecture relative to other artistic disciplines regarding periodization. In addition to its longevity, architecture, unlike other arts, is a composition that society is subject to regardless of a personal or collective desire to be disposed to it. With this thought in mind, the Colosseum as the antiquated skeleton of a single building represents only a microcosm of an existing urban dilemma, which elicits the original question asked of the relationship between society and the built environment - *we are what we build, but how so?*

This thesis has thus far described three roles of architecture - architecture as art, architecture as function, and architecture as a cultural chronicler, concluding that an aspiration toward any single role may limit the manifestation of the other two components in the final building. This section describes a fourth and final role of architecture, which may describe the fate of even the most nimble building - architecture as an institution. The front matter of this thesis defines an institution as *a system of established and embedded social rules that structure social interactions (Hodgson 2007)*. The built environment structures social interactions according to (but not limited to) the paradigms that initially influenced the design of the built space. When buildings become institutionalized in the built environment, they become perpetuations of the paradigm under which such architecture was created. It culturally chronicles, but the narrative it archives is

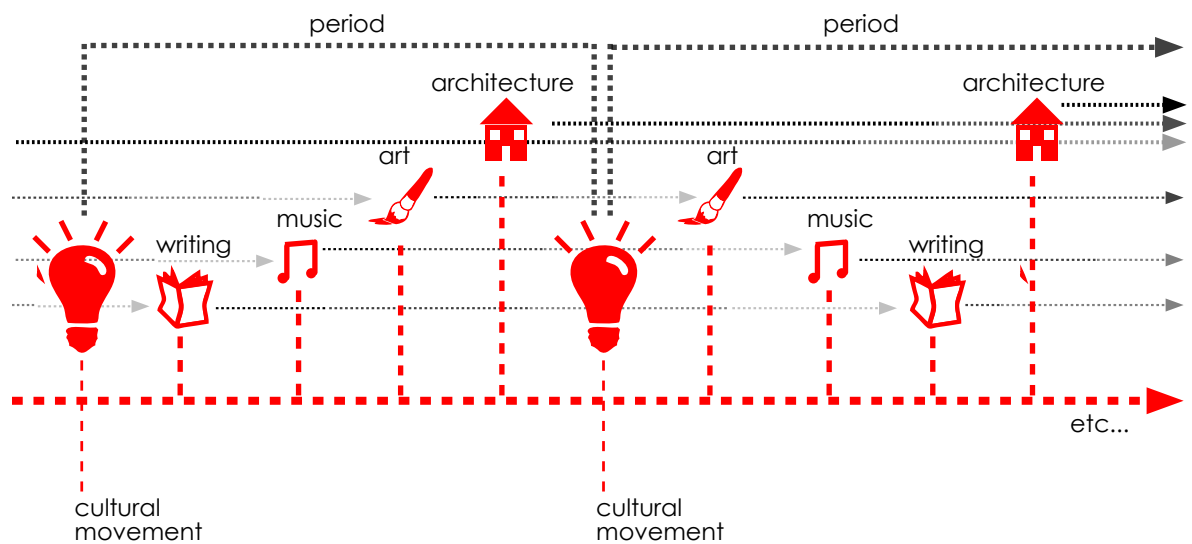


figure 2.4 the periodization of art and architecture, longevity and the spanning of periods

collectively understood as being disposable. The innate longevity of a buildings allows institutionalized architecture to endure until there is an inclination to manage its onerous state. As a result, the building lags society as a perpetuator of antiquated thought, and a deterrent to producing a more fruitful use of the space it consumes. As Stuart Brand was quoted earlier: *"When we deal with buildings we deal with decisions taken long ago for remote reasons. We Argue with anonymous predecessors and lose"* (Brand 1994). When buildings cease to adapt, the social and economic cost to the collective society is minimal, though not always quickly remedied. When cities, communities, and the urban environment cease to adapt, when the built environment becomes a national architectural institution, when the collective built environment becomes a corpse, the cost to society reverberates for generations.

In summary of the findings in *section 2.1 and 2.2*, media has been described as a chronicler of day-to-day culture measuring the gradual advancement of collective thought while periodization summarizes the totality of cultural progress. Art as an aggregation of the media and day-to-day culture can be described as the catalyst of progress - a microcosm of periodization. Art, regardless of the period in which it originated, can prescribe or be perceived as an ideal toward which society progresses or breaks away from, prescribes again, and so on, moving culture forward as the timeline advances. Architecture then partially fulfills multiple roles as *media*, a chronicling of day to day culture, *art*, a collective movement forward, a *cultural chronicler* - an embodiment of periodization, and lastly, an *institution*, a restraint on progress. Periodization then aggregates the media, art an architecture movements to define the beginning and the end of cultural eras based

on time as seen in *figure 2.5*.

The remainder of this chapter frames the context in which architecture may fail to adapt and inevitably institutionalize, citing contemporary examples of the built environment as a cultural fragment that endures periodic transitions to become a lagging institution in contemporary society.

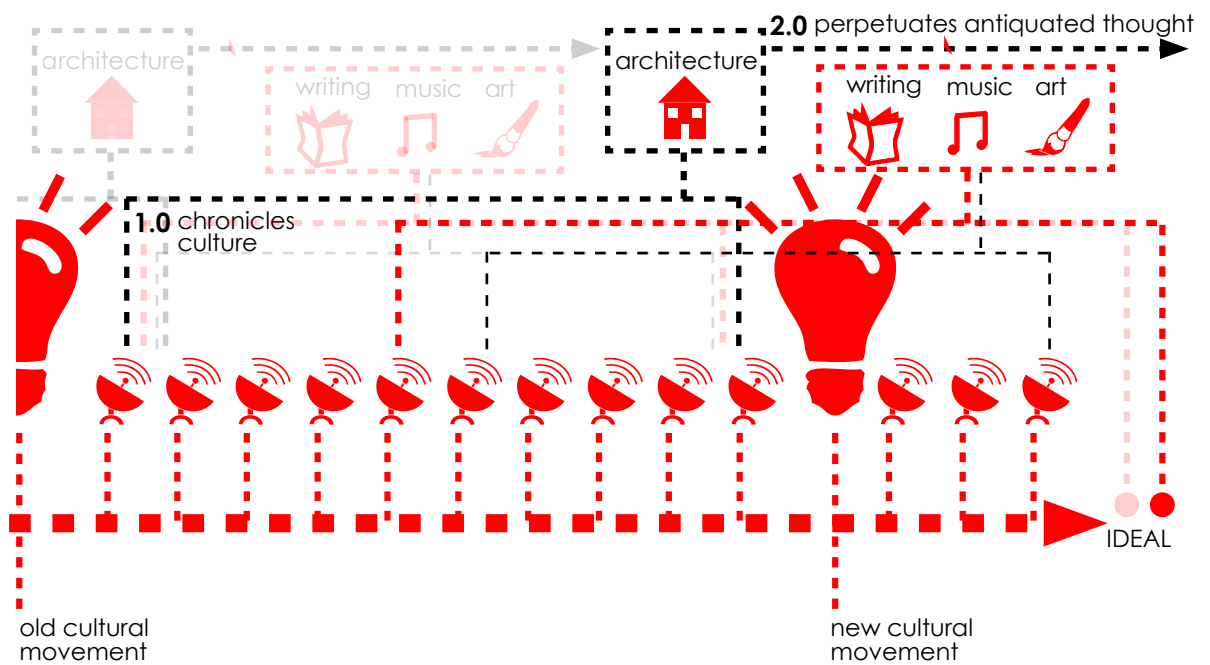


figure 2.5 architecture as a cultural chronicler, institution

2.3.0 Managing the Corpse: Collective Change and Retrofitting the Built Environment

In the children's book *Winnie the Pooh and The Honey Tree*, Pooh pays Rabbit a visit for a luncheon, but nearly had to cancel the occasion when Pooh discovered that he could barely fit through the entrance hole to Rabbit's house. With much effort, Pooh makes it inside, where Rabbit treats him to a large meal of milk and honey. After eating plentifully, Pooh bids farewell to Rabbit and proceeds to leave. He squeezes his head through the entrance, his front paws, his shoulders - but having eaten too much, his bottom gets stuck. Rabbit calls Christopher Robin over who attempts to pull Pooh out of the hole, but he won't budge. He tries to push Pooh back in to the house, but again he doesn't move. Rabbit begins to worry that he'll never be able to use his front door again. Christopher Robin concludes that the only solution is to wait for Pooh to get thinner, and to get thinner, one must wait an entire week. And so it was not an ideal situation for Rabbit, not having use of his front door, and he frequently reminded Pooh of his inconveniences - he could not use the front entrance, Pooh's bottom was taking up too much space on the inside, and so on. Days pass, and Rabbit gradually begins to accept the circumstances, tolerating it only by covering up the unsightliness of Pooh's bottom and soliciting utility from the disruption. Rabbit paints over pooh to hide him, he hangs his towels and belongings on Pooh's legs - it is not ideal, but he makes the most of the situation. After a week passes, with great effort, Rabbit and Robin are able to dislodge Pooh, and Rabbit regains his front entrance and the surrounding space (Campbell 1993).



figure 2.6 Pooh poorly decides to over-eat and as expected, he gets stuck in Rabbit's front entrance (www.poohtalk.com)



figure 2.7 Pooh clogging his front entrance is not ideal for Rabbit environment, but without other options, he must try to make the most of the situation (www.poohtalk.com)

The story of Rabbit and Pooh is analogous to that of society and architecture. Like Pooh over-eating despite knowing the predicament he would soon face with the front entrance, decisions are made about the built environment, particularly in mass-produced buildings,

to cater toward short term interests at the cost of adaptability when time obligates changes in need and function. And just as with Rabbit, this parochiality obligates society to deal with a far less than ideal situation with its environment, forcing beauty and function out of unsuitable circumstances, which, as with Pooh, only change with time and investment. Just as Rabbit painted and hung towels on Pooh, we hopelessly re-skin, reconstitute, and/or eventually demolish the components of the built environment that lag us. Pooh was finally dislodged and Rabbit regained his space and front entrance, but only after spending week encumbered by the disruption. In the same way architecture lags society. In the period following a building's loss of functionality to the moment of its demolition, society is encumbered by its existence. Stuart Brand refers to this stage of a buildings life cycle as being *the corpse*. The corpse is what remains of a building or space when it exists in the built environment beyond its life cycle of adaptability or intended use. The skeleton of the building endures as a perpetuation of the original function and the paradigm that inspired its initial creation. The corpse, as a product of an institution, becomes itself an institution governing and necessitating collective behavior. This section outlines common scenarios which result in defunct but enduring built environments, citing examples of existing social lag.

2.3.1 Identifying Paradigms in the Built Environment

Section 2.2.4 Architecture is an Institution discussed the reasons why buildings and spaces remain in the built environment long after their productive life cycle. Such spaces remain because the building has a significant narrative and has become invaluable to society as

a cultural chronicler, or it remains because the immediate economic and functional consequences of addressing the lag of the built space are too great. Society must adapt around the built environment rather than it adapting to society - the built environment becomes regulatory as an institution governing the collective lifestyle. Contemporary and future societies will eke out necessary functions in spaces designed specifically for other purposes in the past. The built environment adapts far slower than society progresses, and society progresses slower because of the built environment. The following subsections will frame examples of economic and functional lag of the built environment by identifying the initial paradigm and aspiration for constructing the space in the past, followed by its use or uselessness in the present.

2.3.2 The Built Environment and Technology: Embodying a Specialization in Dependency

“By transferring power from human organisms to machines, [the engineer] has decreased the number of variable factors and integrated the process as a whole. These are the gains of organization and administration. The other set of gains has come through standardization and serial production. This involves the reduction of a whole group of different articles, in which differences did not correspond, to essential qualities, to a limited number of types. One of these types can be established and suitable machines devised to processing and manufacturing them the process can approach more and more closely to automatism. The dangers here lie in premature standardization; and in making assembled objects - like automobiles - so completely standardized that they cannot be improved without a

wholesale scrapping of the plant. This was the costly mistake that was made in the Ford Model T. But in all the ranges of production where typification is possible large production economies can be achieved by that method alone” (Mumford 1934).

This quote from Lewis Mumford in his book *Technics and Civilization* perfectly summarizes the relationship between the built environment of the city, its industry, and ultimately, technology. The concept of premature standardization as described in the Model T example equally applies to the configuration of the city whose economic prosperity is reliant on a single industry. For Ford, the manufacturing plant acclimated itself to the manufacturing of a particular version of the automobile that when the technology changed, the plant was resolved beyond adaptability and abandonment proved more viable than recuperation. When a city shapes its industry around a specific technology, otherwise known as *over-specialization*, the result is just the same as the fate of the Ford plant. The built environment synchronizes to the industry, unconsciously shaping itself around its production, organizing itself in such a way that the ensemble becomes particularized to an irreversible state of specificity. By way of short-sightedness, negligence or otherwise, when the industry dissolves the built environment has already been designed for obsolescence. Whatever temporary economic advantages were obtained from the specialization are soon overshadowed by a diminishing quality of life and quality of environment as urban spaces becomes resistant to adaptation. More so, by placing all of its eggs in one basket, so to speak, the city forfeits stability for volatility, as Mumford continues: *“Just as every region has a potential balance of animal life and vegetation, so it has a potential social balance between industry and*

agriculture, between cities and farms, between built-up spaces and open spaces. A region entirely specialized for a single resource, or covered from boundary line to boundary line by a solid area of houses and streets, is a defective environment, no matter how well its trade may temporarily flourish” (Mumford 1934). The built environment assimilates the bias of the economy and embodies its volatility, heavily. During the Industrial Revolution in the United States, buildings of the *work* typology - the factory, the warehouse, the refinery, the mill, and the storage facility constituted the urban environment as a machine for production. Following the Industrial Revolution, the rise of the service industry gave way to typologies of the parking garage, the office building, and infrastructures of transportation, utilities, and retail. Rather than diversifying its industry, the city resolves to corner itself in to a specific trade for short-lived gain, and the built environment pins the community to its decision. The obvious question looms - what happens to the industry when the technology changes and the trade disappears? The resulting social and economic consequences are complex, but the outcome for the built environment is simple - it remains. Within its specific industry, the built environment could tolerate minor refinements to its function, but in the absence of the industry the buildings, the spaces, and the infrastructure all fail in the sense that the purpose which they were designed and refined to accommodate has faded. Afterward they remain as corpses from which the local community labors to siphon relevant function. The following subsection cites examples of such a scenario.

2.3.3 Shifts of Technology, Shifts of Economy, Obsolete Architecture

Failure of industry and architecture became the scenario for several American cities following the rise and fall of the industrial revolution from the nineteenth to early twentieth century and even more recently with the global economic slump of the early twenty first century. The failure is due to a process of synchronization. The industry syncs to a technology, the built environment syncs to the industry, then the technology changes and the industry dies, but the architecture remains. Industry and technology establish a framework for an architecture of consumption that ultimately becomes obsolete as the fickle nature of mass media trickles down to industrial and production trends.

Ghost towns represent immediate, explicit examples of this synchronization process. For instance, Bannack, Montana, a typical American frontier boomtown grew and concretized around the mining



figure 2.8 an abandoned hotel is one of nearly one hundred enduring buildings of the ghost town, Bannack, Montana

industry when gold was discovered there in 1862. Seemingly a boundless resource in the area, the town was declared the capital of what was then known as the Montana territory in 1864. However, by the 1970s, the valuable resources in the area had been depleted, the mines closed, and the last residents had left Bannack. Today, the bones of frame and log constructed buildings are all that remain of the deserted town as a testament to the expired industry that founded it. Although the technology did not change, the local economy and architecture were dependent on a limited resource. Bannack is now preserved as a national park and historic district visited by tourists every year (National Historic Landmarks 2010).

Bannack serves as a microcosm describing the industrial development of major cities in the United States from heart of the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth century to its existing condition. Take for example the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which was once the iron and steel capital of the world. In the late nineteenth century, the United States sought to construct a national railroad system to unify the country's industry. The local entrepreneur of the time, Andrew Carnegie, saw a business opportunity in the railroad expansion and entered Pittsburgh into the steel industry niche. In 1901, Carnegie, following the development of several other iron and steel enterprises, founded the *United States Steel Corporation* in Pittsburgh, declaring that with steel he would *put all of his eggs in one basket, and then watch the basket*. The Pittsburgh economy and built environment would follow Carnegie and his declaration. For the next eighty years, as a result of the steel demands of the national railroad and the two World Wars, Pittsburgh grew physically and economically around its booming manufacturing industry (Lorant 1964).

Within a three-year period between 1981 and 1983, the industry rapidly collapsed resulting in the loss of over one hundred thousand manufacturing jobs. *What happened?* Technology changed, demand declined, but primarily there was a collective reorientation of American corporations away from manufacturing. Corporations began spending more money buying and selling each other than they spent on manufacturing investments. As a result, when the steel manufacturing technology shifted, no investments were made to keep pace. Like Mumford's analogy of pre-standardization with the Model T automobile, the built environment of Pittsburgh became so attuned to a specific manufacturing process that the cost of adapting to new technology became too great. By 1987, not a single ton of steel was made in the once proclaimed steel capital of the world. The industry



figure 2.9 photo of the Jones and Laughlin steel mill, which operated for 122 years along the Monogahela River - unadaptable, it has now been demolished and replaced by the American Eagle headquarters (Lorant 1964, photo www.gapersblockmechanics.com)

had faded, and like Bannack and other settlements before it, the built environment that synced to the local industry remained intact after its decline. In the time between the 1981-1987 collapse, Pittsburgh shifted its eggs into a new basket as over a half-dozen high-rise office buildings were constructed changing the color of the Pittsburgh collar from blue to white, but the mill and factory buildings that founded the city still possessed urban space and waterfronts (Lorant 1964). Over twenty years later the city is still wrestling with these obsolete building corpses, scraping function out of the steel industry-synced built environment spaces through demolition, re-purposement, or memorialization. The industrial buildings that remain today stand ominously as a forewarning of the future of the service industry-synced structures going up today.



figure 2.10 The Carrie Furnace still stands outside Pittsburgh (www.phlf.com 2011)

Pittsburgh was fortunate to have substantial outside investment in other trades to warrant re-purposing or demolition of the industrial buildings to avoid their effects of collective social lag, but other cities following a similar evolution did not fare as well. As if foreshadowed by Lewis Mumford's critique of the Model T automobile, the most recent case study for the failure of over-specialization took place between Detroit, Michigan, and the automobile industry following the 2008 economic recession. In it's post-World War Two heyday, the Detroit auto industry was the fourth largest manufacturing business in the United States allowing the Detroit population to crawl to just under two million residents. Today, the city is a large-scale Bannack, Montana, a ghost town, with a population of fewer than half of that number and an unemployment rate peaking at nearly thirty percent. Over one third of Detroit is vacant or abandoned land. Nearby Flint, Michigan, home of General Motors, had the largest percent of



figure 2.11 the PPG Place opened in 1984, shortly following the collapse of the steel industry (www.bc.edu 2011)

population decrease of any inhabited city in the United States in 2008. It is hardly a secret that the cause of these negative statistics is a result of over-specialization in the auto industry. The fallout in the built environment is evident in the abandonment in both Detroit and Flint, as is the ensuing social retardation. Nearly one million people still reside in Detroit and one hundred thousand people in Flint, and they are subject to the abandonment of over half and two thirds of their peak populations respectively (Wallis 2010). Time will tell if re-investment can recuperate the urban and social context. One possible solution is proposed by wealthy Detroit native, John Hantz, who has offered thirty million dollars to turn ten thousand acres of abandoned or vacant Detroit land into an urban farm - a tested, resilient, and perpetually necessary trade - to stabilize and diversify the local economy (Whitford



figure 2.12 abandoned factories and warehouses in Detroit, Michigan, a city that has been declining since the 1980s and most recently in the 2008 recession (Google Images 2011)



figure 2.13 additional photos of abandoned homes, warehouses and land in Flint and Detroit, Michigan

2009). Whether or not this is a proper plan for revitalization, Hantz's proposal exemplifies the necessary resources of personal investment, resources, and resilient planning for re-purposing an over-specialized city. Albeit radical change, the urban farm proposal is indicative of a motion toward stability in diversity and localization. However, the lessons of Pittsburgh and Detroit have not been transcribed in to the collective conscious yet, as perpetuation and repetition of over-specialization is emerging in other areas of the country with the arrival of new industries. For instance, the boom of the natural gas industry in the northeast United States encompassing the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia are causing an influx (seventy percent of the workers are coming from out of state) to the area for an industry expected to last a meager thirty to forty years. The built environment will expand to accommodate this influx, but how will it shrink when it is gone? (Mahon 2011)

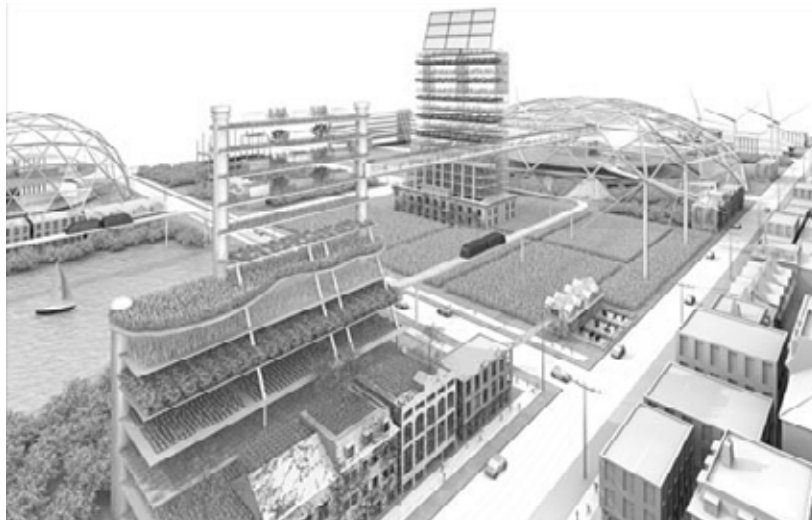


figure 2.14 proposal to turn Detroit and ten thousand acres of vacant and abandoned land into the world's largest urban farm (Whitford 2009)

2.3.4 Deep-Seated Processes at Work

The city, or those who guide its development, may not be entirely at fault for their city's over-specialization as significant externalities such as the national railroad regarding Pittsburgh may force the development of such economies. Additionally, structures of failure are inherent to the typification of architecture to the building genres which these economies mandate. The institutional typology for example understands its historical value from the beginning and takes on a monumental quality, but does so at the sacrifice of functionality. The discordance of the Congressional Library expansion over the last one hundred years as discussed earlier in this thesis exemplifies the unalterable nature of the institutional typology (Brand 1994). Take for instance the typology of the office building as well. The title of the genre itself implies a single function - namely the cultivation of the white-collared service industry. And so the office buildings come to cities in great numbers in various shapes and sizes from one story low rises to over one hundred story skyscrapers to accommodate this industry. They dabble in daylighting schemes, ventilation systems, colors, materials, textures, all for the purpose of fostering its solitary purpose of *work*. But how does this typology adapt to the growing lifestyle of *live/work* or *work/play*? For every towering office building that goes up in a city, a towering structure devoted to single use residential space must follow. In the United States, the unbalance between live and work in the city forces people to seek habitation in the urban fringe, in the suburbs (which *chapter four* explains in greater detail). The expansion and development of the city around industry

squeezed out the people, spaces, and qualities that make the urban center a desirable place to inhabit.

The formulation of the built environment to bias toward industry and mechanization over quality of space, life, and community is the embodiment of the negative social consequences of mass-minded processes such as mass media, the influence of which cities must now struggle to uproot and discard. The method for doing so, however, has become entirely convoluted - the city labors to re-invigorate and conceal the failing pieces of its built environment, while in the active quarters it promotes temporal gains from single function developments - the circumstance which contributed to the condition of the struggling districts in the first place. Mumford comments on this process as follows: *"The form of the metropolis, then, is its formlessness, even as its aim is its own aimless expansion. Those who work within the ideological limits in this regime have only a quantitative conception of improvement: they seek to make its buildings higher, its streets broader, its parking lots more ample: they would multiply bridges, highways, tunnels, making it ever easier to get in and out of the city, but constricting the amount of space available within the city for any other purpose than transportation itself"* (Mumford 1961). The method for restoring stability in industry and built space is only a perpetuation of the problem, even as diversity and regionalism constitute possibilities of formulating adaptable and successful spaces. The city of Pittsburgh as discussed is an emulation of this idea as it labors to recuperate from its former dependence on the steel industry and retain its declining population. Riverfronts that were once dominated by factories and steel mills are being reconstituted to public space as parks, trails, and green spaces recapture these dynamic waterfront areas. Living

space, residence, is adapted from industrial building typologies. Old warehouses are converted to offices as quickly as new single-function office buildings emerge, with little attention paid to the housing need as an influx of people move to urban areas (World Urbanization Prospects 2010).

The city skyline grows as a sign for a future morgue for architecture, a large scale institution on the horizon, a federation of building corpses that will lag the dynamics of urban activity and of cultural growth as social impediments for generations to come. Certainly built environments are not designed or created to lag society, but this is an architectural and social consequence that is customary to periodization. Given the outcome of the production industries before it, the service industry risks becoming obsolete when dictated by the natural course of changes in culture and technology, as Mumford goes on to describe: “*The modern metropolis is, rather, an outstanding example of a peculiar cultural lag within the realm of technics itself: namely, the continuation by highly advance technical means of the obsolete forms and ends of a socially retarded civilization...When both the evil and the remedy are indistinguishable, one may be sure that a deep-seated process is at work*” (Mumford 1961). The deep-seated process is the underlying social framework from which paradigms emerge and by which intervals are defined in periodization. It implicitly governs the industry and the built environment as a result of the institutionalized behavior and technologies its paradigms establish. Deep-seated mass-minded processes, which led to the creation and institutionalization of mass media, developed the paradigm, technology and social consequences of isolation that are the focus of investigation in the next chapter.



CHAPTER THREE

MASS MEDIA: THE SOCIAL ISOLATION PARADIGM



Chapter Three: Mass Media: The Social Isolation Paradigm

With *chapter two's* discussion of the cultural role of media, art and architecture as a backdrop, chapter three engages in a historical and institutional analysis of media systems as a case study for deep-seated mass-minded processes at work. Particularly, mass media's relationship with collective behavior and human social interaction in the built environment. Following the investigation of the cultural role of architecture, this chapter begins as chapter two began, but with much greater questions concerning mass media culture, cultural homogeneity, and cultural consumption - the largely unintended social consequences of mass media - as they relate to manifestations in the built environment. Chapter three threads these concepts back to the original institution which created them for the purpose of defining their role in creating a paradigm of social isolation, and interpreting their contribution to the current state of social disconnection in the built environment.

3.1.0 Evolution of Mass Media: An Institution for Social Isolation

It has already been noted that industry and technology can be a foundation for an architectural framework of deficiency, but if industry can be said to sync to technology, and architecture can be said to sync to industry, what is the correlative of technology? Architecture embodies both technology and industry, but from what does technology originate? Immediately what may come to mind regarding technological advancement are changes in the individual or collective need - warfare and economic competition are both exemplary of this. However, *need* alone does not possess the capability of progressing technology, it only catalyzes the development.

“To understand *progressing technology* it is first necessary to unravel the origin of the progression, which Lewis Mumford describes in three generalizations - *a creative syncretism of inventions, gathered from the debris of other civilizations, make possible a mechanical body*” (Mumford 1934). Mumford characterizes technological development as being dependent upon improvements of the innovations of past cultures and borrowing from the ingenuity of those in the present. Invention spawns invention, and the catalyst is the need or the cultural paradigm - the thought which produces the reason for the invention. “*The machine cannot be divorced from its larger social pattern, for it is this pattern that gives meaning and purpose. Every period of civilization carries with it the insignificant refuse of past technologies and the important germs of new ones: but the center of growth lies within its own complex*” (Mumford 1934). The relationship between technology and culture is that their advancement hinges on evolving thought. The correlative of technology is the collective paradigm, and even more so, the deep-seated process. Technology synchronizes to the paradigm which produces it, thus instating an innate bias to it.

Recall the front matter of this thesis defined a paradigm as *the result of institutional influence on collective thought to dictate the formation of ideas, actions, responses, etc., which are relatively homogeneous among individuals subject to the institution in a given period of time* (Hodgson 2007). Fully understanding a paradigm necessitates an investigation of the deep-seated process that shaped it. To properly analyze the influence of mass media and mass media technologies today, it is necessary to thread them back through history to the formation of the societal process from which they developed.

3.1.1 History of Mass Media

When mass media is traced back through history, it unfolds amid a relatively distinct time frame during the Renaissance Period where the social, economical, and political aspects of culture began taking on a more universal, mass-minded quality. It began with the *romanticism of numbers*. An obsession for keeping time, accounting numbers in trade, and keeping track of money. Western culture was developing a scientific and objective method of thinking. In the northern cities of Florence and Venice in Italy, this scientific thinking led to barter economies being replaced with economies of accounting and coined money. Local coinage and social currency, the trading of resources, were replaced with an international credit structure, introducing words such as loan, save, draft, bill - the symbols of abstract wealth we are familiar with today (Mumford 1934). What happened in northern Italy to spur this model of commerce? A Renaissance paradigm of self-governance that de-emphasized government arbitration was influencing the economy as a foundation for a rising merchant class. The growth in power and

wealth of the merchant class threatened the authority of the governing monarchy and the upper class, which responded by seeking greater dominion through collaboration with the largest companies existing at the time. The monarchy allowed these substantial companies to monopolize their respective industries in exchange for loyalty and stock in their business, which guaranteed wealth and security of power for both parties. This collaboration between the monarchy and the upper merchant class marks the establishment of the world's first corporations (Rushkoff Ofcom 2009).

The institutionalization of the corporate structure paved the way for

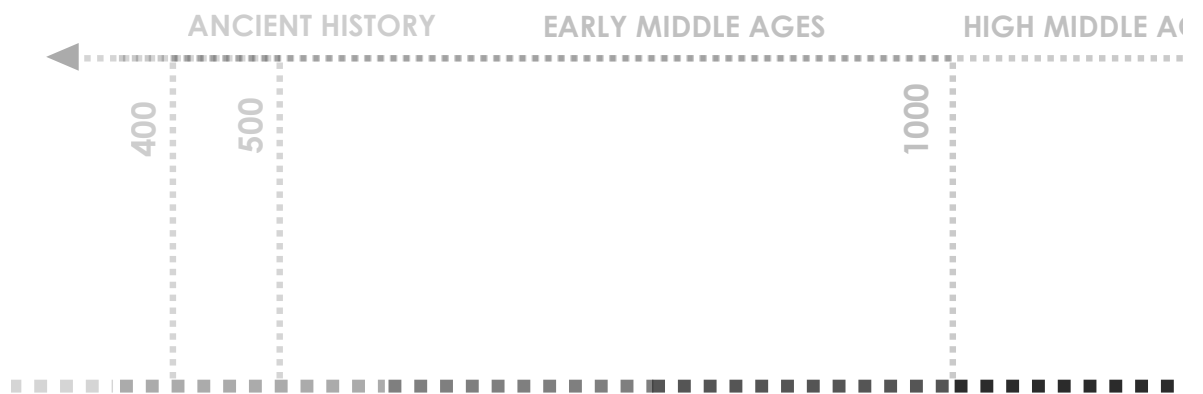
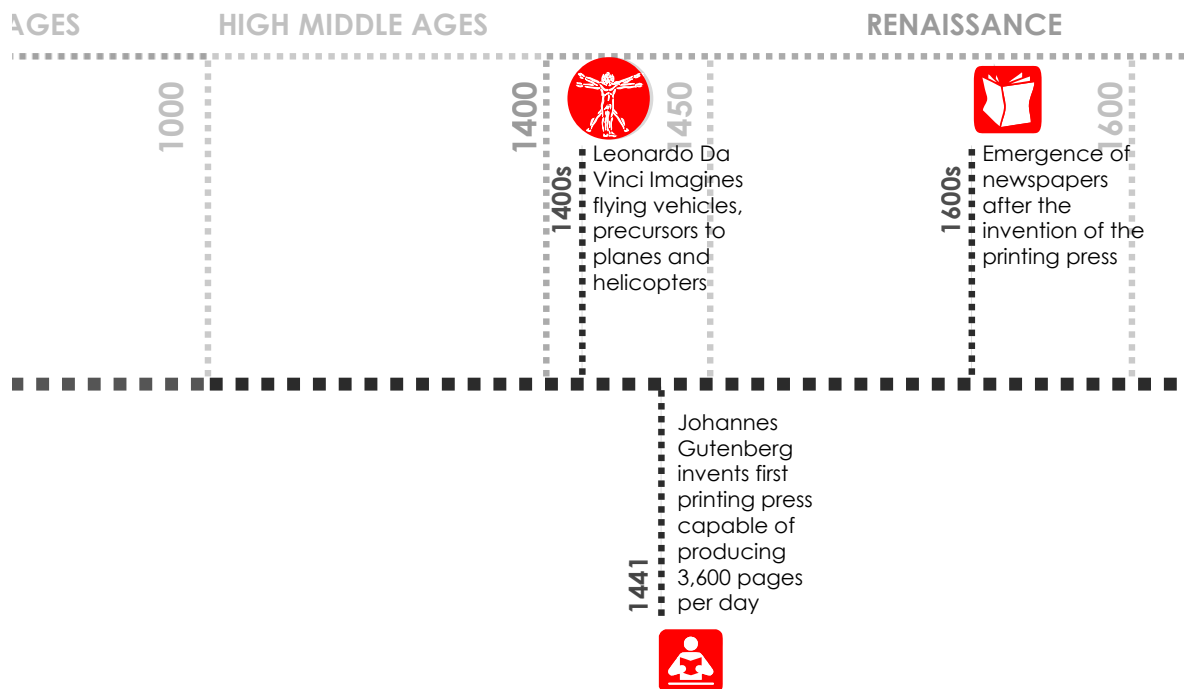
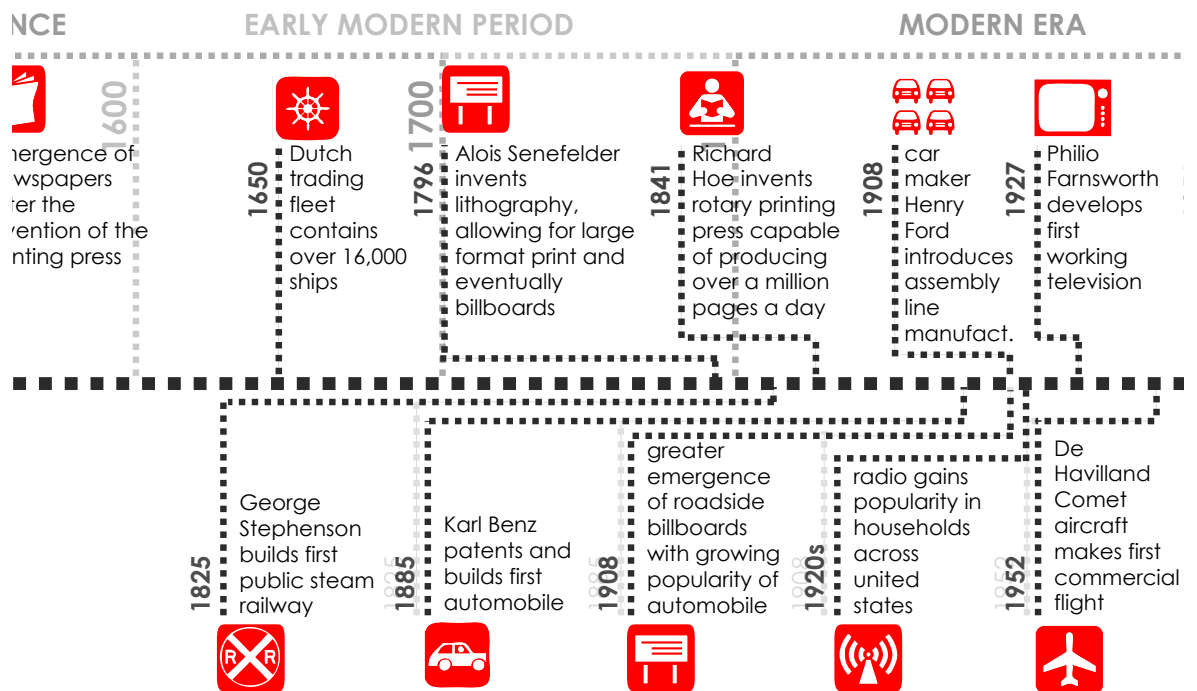


figure 3.1 the chronology of mass media and mass media technology development, peaking at the Renaissance into today. (continued on next four pages)

technologies of mass production that were biased toward this breed of an economy. Systems of mass instituted the first occurrence of social isolation as local economies dissolved causing local communities to become disconnected. *“The Freedom to operate independent workshops and factories, to use machines and profit by them, went to those who had command of the capital”* (Mumford 1934). Commercial profit harnessed the mass-minded processes for developing technologies of mass production and the machine. Technology inherited a bias toward capital gain, and it took capital to create and own the technology. The machine reduced the number of enterprises in any given trade, because the individual machine created more

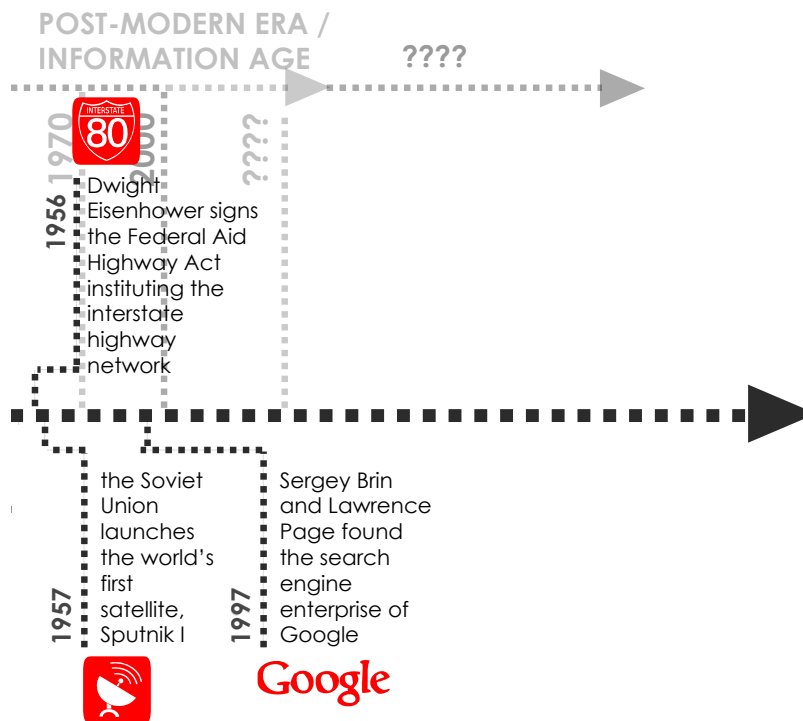


output than the individual worker or business. As smaller enterprises dissolved, the dominant corporations grew larger, and the global population was growing concurrently. Fewer companies needed to meet the manufacturing needs of more people. This inverse proportion of businesses to population created the need for technologies of mass production. Although production was matching the growth of the consumer, dissemination was not. As a result, corporations emphasized cargo shipping across waters magnifying international trade routes. While this emerging economic model had instituted technologies of mass production, the need to publicize that production necessitated technologies of mass communication. Mass marketing developed to negate the physical distance between producer and



consumer - as fewer corporations began to mass-produce more goods for more people, it required a medium for connecting the public to the production, which is known today as *mass media* (Rushkoff 2009).

Mass media technologies would develop from a need to mass market production. The original mass medium was the same object which liberated the art-purpose of architecture, *paper*. And with paper, mass media and mass production technology would coalesce in 1441, with Johanne Gutenberg's printing press. The newspaper soon became a normalized mass media technology, and with it an opportunity for potent advertisement. Advertisement campaigns would develop



over the next centuries, evolving into normalized components of our culture. By the late eighteenth century, the invention of lithography allowed for billboards to flood the built environment. Advertising on buildings normalized as well (Winston 1998). The advertised product would arrive almost as quickly as media could communicate it. Mass transportation networks, such as the national railroad system in the United States, ensured that the production was reaching the public in accordance with the knowledge mass media had already afforded them.

With mass production, marketing and distribution at their disposal, the territory, the capital, and the influence of corporations grew, and local economies were unable to compete with that growth. The benefit of the resulting mass-minded processes was widespread affordability and accessibility to production. However, the unintended social consequence was that locally recognized businesses, tradesmen and laborers were substituted with nationally recognized brands. In his book *Life, Inc.*, Douglas Rushkoff illustrates this relational substitution by citing the Quaker Oats brand as an example: *"[Quaker Oats] was developed to substitute for the relationship you used to have with the miller. Instead of seeing his face over an open barrel at the mill or the general store, you'd see the face of a Quaker on a box of factory-made oats. Quaker Oats combined the three biggest local Midwestern mills into a single company, and sought to change the way America bought its oats by replacing the human being you knew with a brand...and these brand stories would need to communicate themselves instantly... this way the customer would already know who the Quaker was and what he represented before [the consumer] arrived at the grocery store"* (Rushkoff 2009). Not only were locally known distributors being

replaced by national corporations, but their products too. Half a century ago, the average individual knew his or her butcher, grocer, dairyman - social interaction and community were the fruits of a local economy. The interaction with local tradesman has been replaced by a weekly, impersonal expedition to the supermarket, where only by chance might one encounter a fellow community member. The substitution of a local economy for mass-minded processes reveals the unintended social consequences of a mass-minded system as communities that developed around their own enterprises were consequently disbanded. As Rushkoff suggests with the Quaker Oats model, mass media was an institution created not for entertainment purposes but to promote mass marketing for economic benefit, but inadvertently at the expense of domestic community. From the printing press to newspapers and onward, mass media and its technology would perpetuate an underlying framework for social isolation that began by replacing communal person-to-person relationships with person-to-brand relationships (Rushkoff Ofcom 2009). Systems of *mass* - mass marketing, mass communication, mass production and mass distribution originated out of the same deep-seated process that shifted the western economy circa six hundred years ago, and the relationships have diverged little to today to become what we know in the United States. *Mass* became a movement toward an aggregation of individuals, not a connected, wholistic society. But again, these systems were not created with the intent to cause social disarray, but that this became an inevitable consequence of mass media development. The unpremeditated outcomes of the isolation bias of mass-minded processes to create a paradigm of social isolation and polarization is the topic of discussion for the remainder of this chapter.

3.1.2 The Social Isolation Paradigm

At its inception, the potency of mass media was limited to the few technologies available at that time. Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1441 allowed for advertising in newspapers, but few other means of advertisement were available until the invention of the radio and lithography. The radio and the lithography process merged with the automobile boom in the early twentieth century leading to car radios, interstate billboards and other instruments of mass media. In fact, the term *mass media* was coined around the same time as these technologies emerged in the first quarter of the twentieth century (Putnam 2001). Today, society is both voluntarily and involuntarily saturated with mass media and its technologies - we purchase televisions and radios that advertise to us and live in cities that do the same. We are subject to a multitude of media outlets from print to the television to the Internet, all of which are accessible through a variety of other means.

In his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert Putnam discusses the statistical data from his research on the collective shift away from communal activity in the United States in the mid to late twentieth century. Putnam maps the gradual decline and disbanding of social groups across the United States despite an increase in popularity of the activities these groups were originally founded to promote. For example, and the title of the book, Putnam describes an increase in the number of people bowling over the last quarter of the twentieth century while the number of bowling leagues and people joining them declined. The activity grew

individually but declined collectively. His research showed this trend of a percentage decline held true for almost every social organization ranging from the *Kiwanis Club* to the *NAACP* to the *Parent-Teacher Association*. Putnam exposes the link between the decline of social activity and the exponential rise of mass media technologies in American households as follows: *"No longer must we coordinate our tastes and timing with others in order to enjoy the rarest culture or the most esoteric information. In 1900, music lovers needed to sit with scores of other people at fixed times listening to fixed programs, and if they lived in small towns as most Americans did, the music was likely to be supplied by enthusiastic local amateurs...In the last half of the century television and its offspring moved leisure into the privacy of our own homes"* (Putnam 2001). Putnam describes a direct correlation between television watching and civic disengagement, stating that every hour spent watching television correlates to a ten-hour decrease in social activity. Furthermore, one half of all television watching is done alone, which means not only are families becoming isolated from one another, but members of a family are detached as well.

Putnam attributes escalating statistics on the disassemblance of community as the result of the social isolation consequences of mass-minded technologies. It strips down society at the communal and domestic level until what remains is an isolated individual and a collective oneness. Recall in chapter two the discussion on the cultural implications of media consumption. It becomes evident that cultural homogeneity, cultural recycling, anachronistic resurrection - all of these social structures discussed by Baudrillard, are a consequence of the isolation paradigm perpetuated by mass media. Social isolation

and uniformity are the *predisposition* of the media because it is much more potent to promote a product to a mass of homogenous, isolated individuals than a diversified group. The media can export a veiled or subverted reality, crafting the description of content to conform to its interests. This is true for daily news or the advertising of a consumable product. If a person views an advertisement in the company of other people there is potential for the expression of negative critique or an unintended branding of the product, but an individual who is subjected only to a positive description of a consumable item, an advertisement's unaltered by another person, is more likely to favorably view the product and seek to consume it (Rushkoff 100). This is the scenario mass media and mass media technology create - a setting that cultivates *cultural recycling* because a collective desire to continually reinvent and update the *self* innately creates a need to consume. A culture saturated with advertising that advocates self-reinvention normalizes and perpetuates consumption, and provides an opportunity to promote with which products *the self* should be updated. And so popular culture is born out of social isolation - the fabricated need to be *with it*, where the *it* is dictated by a handful of media conglomerates, and interaction takes place only after the latest *it* has been consumed (Baudrillard 1998).

3.1.3 The Current State of Mass Media: The Big Six

The limited number of mass media providers allows for less diversity in news broadcasting contributing to factions of cultural homogenization - what we know and how we know it is at the mercy of the integrity of the media outlet (The Center for Public Integrity 2010). Today, news

information in the United States is primarily generated from six media conglomerates known as the *mainstream media* or the *Big Six*, which are (in order of size, holdings, and revenue as of 2010) *General Electric*, *The Walt Disney Company*, *Time Warner*, *News Corporation*, *Viacom*, and the *CBS Corporation*. If these conglomerates are distilled down to their superiors, their chief executive officers, then in an abstract sense the mainstream media is controlled by six individuals who are Jeffrey Immelt, Robert Iger, Jeffrey Bewkes, Rupert Murdoch, Philippe Dauman, and Leslie Moonves respectively (Freepress.net 2010). A benefit of this system are media institutions with the resources to report on global issues, the negative consequence is this limited number of perspectives on the content reported. As previously discussed, the content of their broadcasts is conditioned to their bias, but media content constitutes only a fragment of the cultural influence they wield. Their actions directly impact national concerns in economics, legislation and politics. *Figure 3.2*, *Figure 3.3*, and *Figure 3.4* are institutional mappings for the three largest media conglomerates, charting their financial contributions to political parties, lobbying efforts, and their holdings in media outlets. The mapping illustrates a hierarchy of de-localization as ownership begins with internationally recognized media outlets, filtering down to their ownership of local community news broadcasts.

The result of media conglomerate influence on publicized information is an exacerbation of cultural polarization. News is not delivered as fact but arrives in the public domain as opinion, but only after its broadcast has been calculated and then meticulously distorted through the pretense of forthright debate. Even a few minutes of watching any media outlet reveals an attempt to craft public sentiment

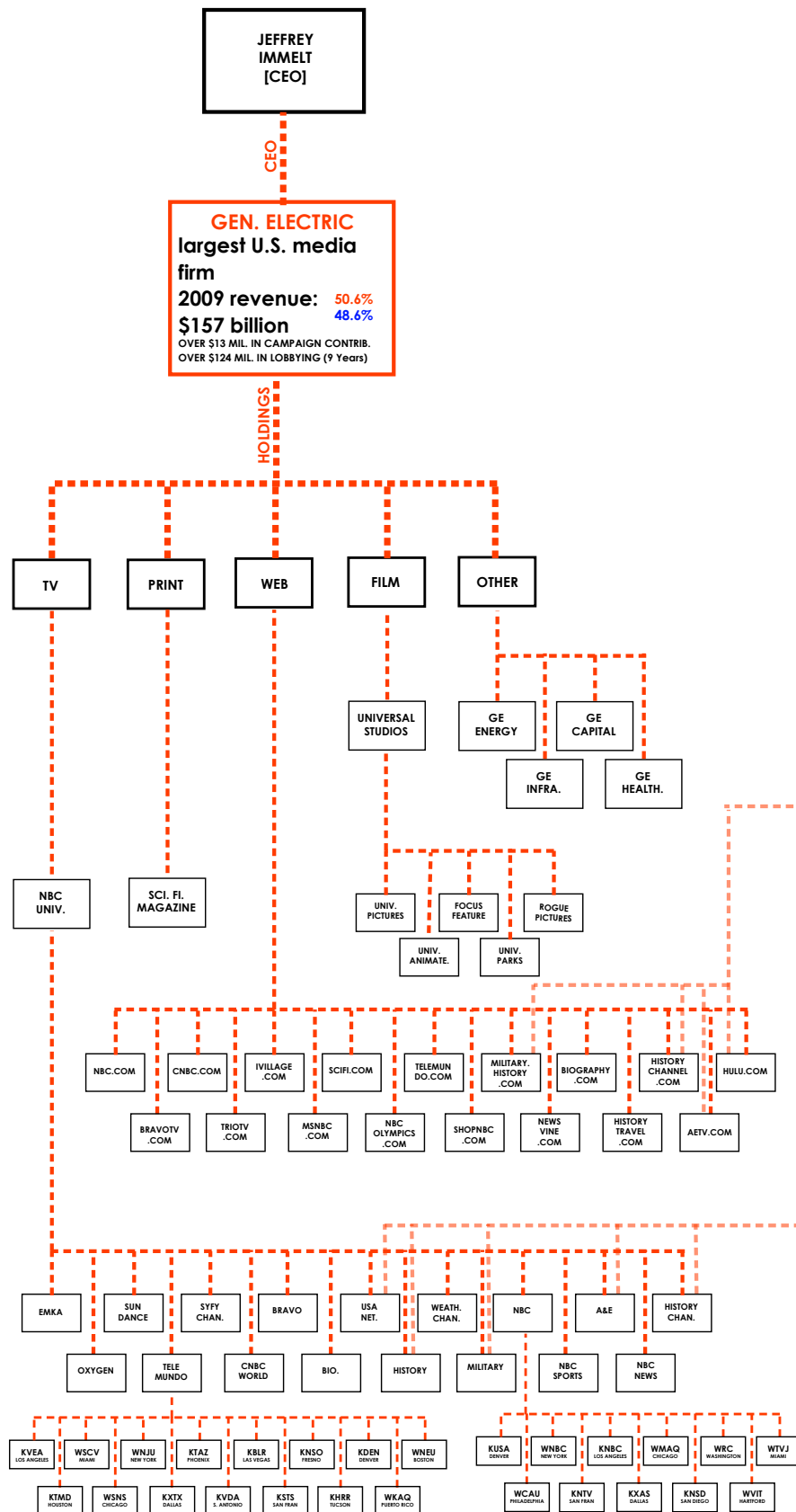


figure 3.2 the holdings and political influence of the largest media conglomerate, General Electric. The percentage in Red indicates money allocation to the republic part, blue indicates democratic party

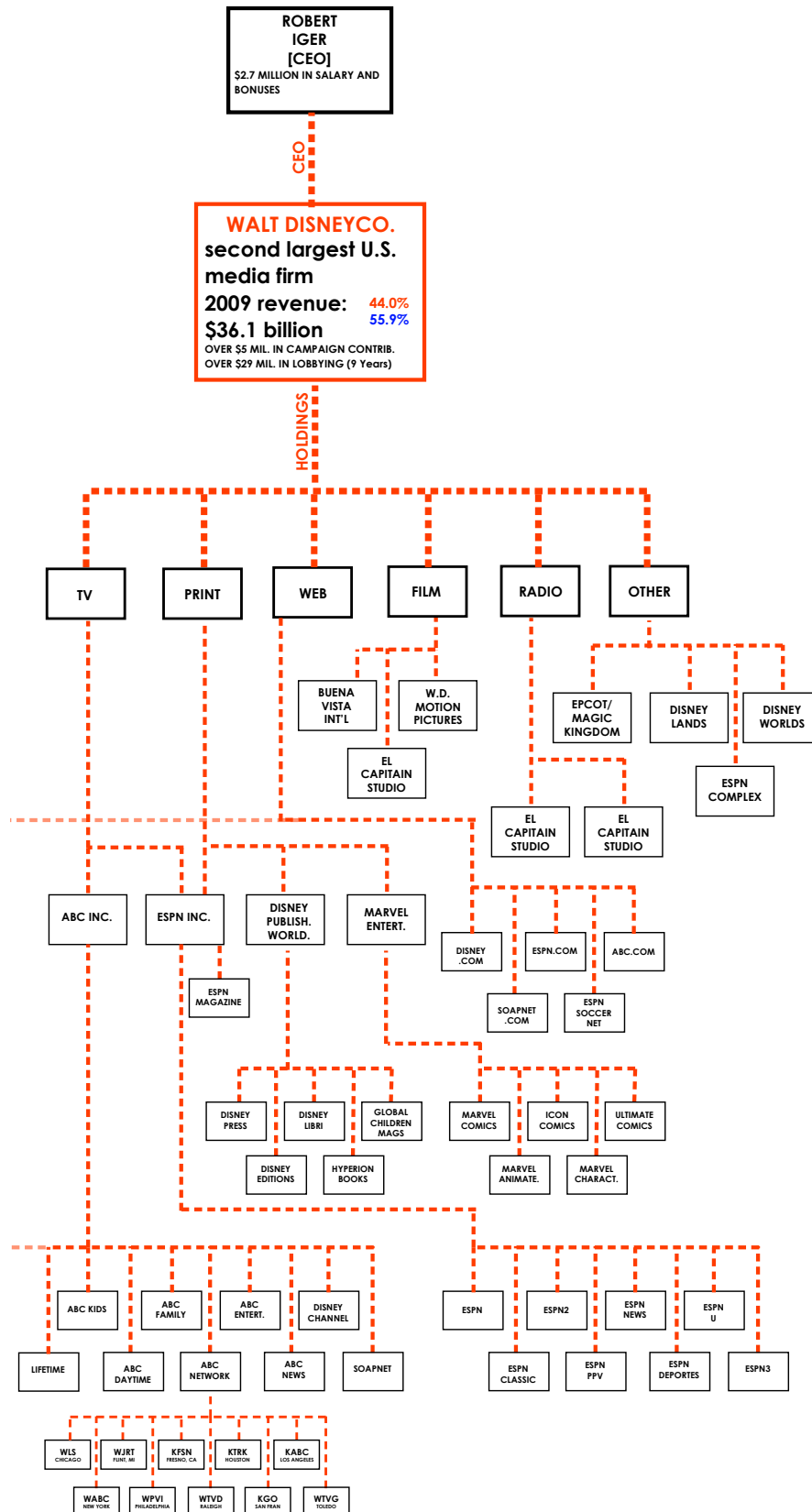


figure 3.3 the holdings and political influence of the second largest media conglomerate, The Walt Disney Corporation

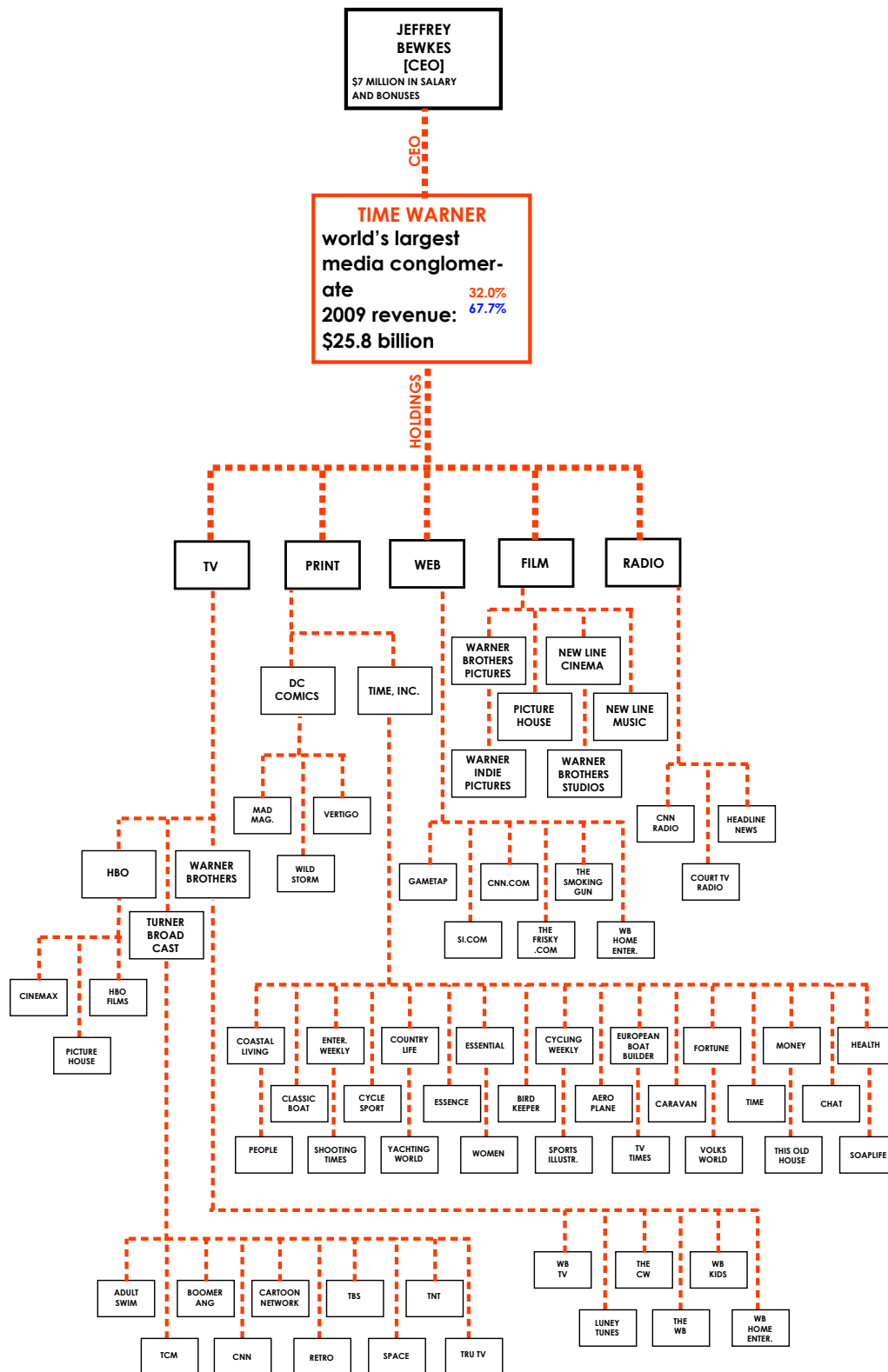


figure 3.4 the holdings and political influence of the third largest media conglomerate, Time Warner

through subtle propagandistic strategies. More recently, the more extreme the content, the more polarizing the result, the more revenue generated from viewer ratings, and so the problem only compounds itself. The polarizing effect of mass media is not specific to advertising, but subsidiary holdings in news organizations and politicians have grown savvy of its power as well. For example, in his book *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey cites Rupert Murdoch, CEO of News Corporation, as an example of media exploitation: “[Rupert Murdoch] is not above or outside particular state powers, but by the same token he wields considerable influence via his media interests in politics in Britain, the US, and Australia. All 247 of the supposedly independent editors of his newspapers worldwide supported the US



figure 3.5 promotions for the self-proclaimed non-political rallies in the graphic style of recent political campaigns.

invasion of Iraq" (Harvey 35). This does not imply that the writers and speakers of these outlets are told what to report, but it comes with the understanding that writers and reporters would not be working for these media companies had they not already demonstrated an intention to say the "correct thing." Murdoch is certainly not alone in his description as a media exploiter as evidenced by the recent *Rally to Restore Sanity* and *Rally to Keep Fear Alive* hosted by television news comedians Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert on October 30th, 2010. The rallies were held in protest to inflammatory political propaganda and hyper-partisanship that causes opposing parties to use their media resources to demonize one another over disagreements (Avlon 2010). The popularity of the rallies may not only suggest the general public is becoming more media savvy, more media critical, but like the Renaissance paradigm of humanism, concepts of self-governance and individual value are potentially re-emerging.

3.2.0 The Built Environment: Synchronization to Deep-Seated Mass-Minded Processes

In conclusion of *chapter three*, it has been discovered that as the built environment syncs to industry and industry syncs to technology, all three became synced to deep-seated cultural processes of mass-minded systems - mass production, mass dissemination, mass communication and mass marketing. The emergence of these systems during the Renaissance Period created the existing mass media institution we have come to know in the United States. The largely unintended, yet negative social consequence of mass media is the development of a social isolation paradigm embedded and sustained in culture through its embodiment in the built environment. The architectural manifestation of mass-minded systems, particularly mass media, is the topic of exploration in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTERPRETING ARCHITECTURAL
FRAMEWORKS OF MASS MEDIA PARADIGMS:
THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE ANTI-SOCIAL



Chapter Four: Interpreting Architectural Frameworks of Mass Media Paradigms: The Architecture of the Anti-Social

Chapter Four interprets the role of deep-seated mass-minded processes in creating a framework for the development of the built environment - architecture as an embodiment of the social isolation paradigm, and architecture as an embodiment of the social consequences of mass media such as cultural homogeneity, cultural consumption, and cultural recycling. Exploration of this embodiment takes place at scales of the global, the urban, the neighborhood, and the individual dwelling. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the lasting effects of an architecture synced to mass-minded technology as a future perpetuation of the social isolation paradigm amid a collective shift away from this thought process.

4.1.0 The Architecture of the Anti-Social

In 1796 Alois Senefelder invented the process of lithography, which allowed large format printing that had never been possible before. One hundred years later, the boom in mass production came in the early twentieth century when Henry Ford invented *Fordism*, the assembly line process of mass-produced car manufacturing. The combination of these two inventions was a tipping point that led to the invention and escalation of mass media in the form of the billboard by the mid twentieth century (Winston 1998). But the billboard was not the only consequence of mass production of personal and public transportation. Not long after the rise of the automobile and billboard did this system of mass production manifest itself in architecture in both space and aesthetic. The building itself became a billboard. Quite literally it became a billboard - a stripped down modernist facade was ripe for the placement of visual stimulus for commercial advertising. But architecture was also a billboard figuratively as an embodiment of its cursory nature. If one were to imagine how such a built space would then be designed, constructed and used, it varies little from the way a billboard would be unconvincingly designed, constructed, and used as a utilitarian commodity (Gartman 2009). Through aesthetic, spatial, and symbolic embodiment, this section explores how the social isolation paradigm of mass media manifested itself in the built environment as an inevitable public subjection to, and perpetuation of, social isolation.

4.1.1 An Anti-Social Vernacular

The billboard characterizes mass production as a process that is not confined solely to common consumer goods, such as automobiles,

as mass production became a manufacturing system for consumable spaces as well. The economy of mass production necessitated an architecture that could be constructed just as quickly as the goods the building was intended to help produce. Author David Gartman describes these buildings in his book *From Autos to Architecture* as he writes: *“The visual order of Fordist instrumentalism was not confined to consumer goods but also spilled over into the built environment. The emerging economy of mass production and mass consumption demanded new spaces...many of these spaces were themselves mass-produced. New construction methods were invented that employed unskilled workers to quickly assemble standardized, factory-made materials into the new spaces of commerce. Not surprisingly, then, these buildings often shared the instrumental look of mass production’s most famous exemplar, the Model T. This was especially true of the factories of mass production such as Ford’s Highland Park plant in Detroit, which was designed by industrial architect Albert Kahn for no other end than to provide a bare-bones, efficient building-machine for the manufacture of the bare-bones, efficient automobile-machine. Like the Model T built in it, the plant was a rectilinear and largely undecorated repetition of standardized parts”* (Gartman 2009).

An architecture of efficiency such as the Ford factory originated out of a synchronization to industry, but the adoption and misplacement of the mass-production/machine ideology into the milieu of high architecture was solidified in 1923 with the widespread publication of architect Le Corbusier’s book, *Vers une Architecture* (Toward an Architecture), in which he famously characterizes the design of a pipe as a *modus operandi* for designing architecture (Corbusier 1923). He further described this *modus operandi* with the *Maison Domino*

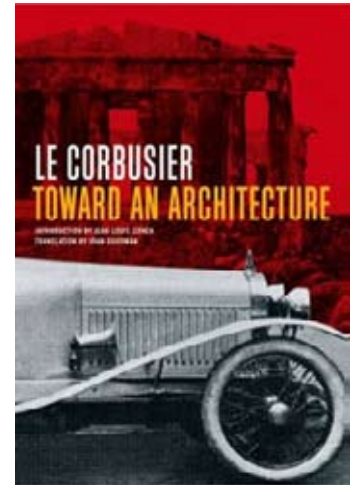


figure 4.1 2007 english re-print of Corbusier's famous book *Vers une Architecture*, originally published in 1923 (Corbusier 2007).

diagram as a bare-boned representation of a building. The diagram describes an architecture where the interior and exterior walls are free from structural responsibility, allowing the building skin to become anything, including advertisement. What can be learned from Corbusier regarding this thesis, not in terms of his theoretical contributions but from an understanding of the institutions existing in the time in which he was born and lived, is that the deep-seated paradigms of mass-minded systems had become institutionalized in architectural thought. The resulting modernist movement in architecture would exemplify that institutionalization. Regardless of the intention of Corbusier's building-as-machine proposition, the social paradigm which bred such reasoning would institute a framework for architecture where the final product is secondary to its production. The benefit of this process became affordable building practices, materials, etc., but consequently the machine aesthetic was misplaced from industry synchronization to

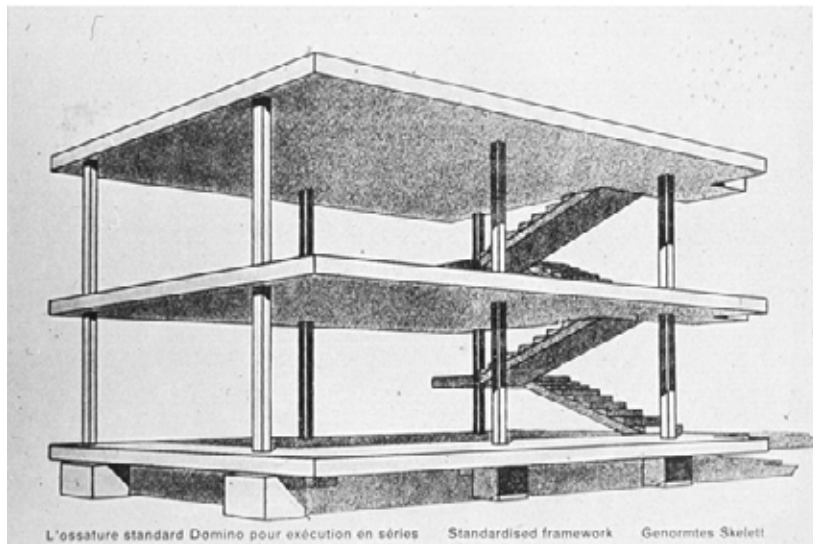


figure 4.2 Corbusier's *Maison Domino* diagram for a building prototype where exterior walls are liberated to fulfill purposes other than structure (Corbusier 2007).

that which ought not to operate as a machine, such as public, social, and living spaces - spaces where efficient mechanization does not identify with the human condition. Mass-minded systems celebrate the benefits of the machine aesthetic as a reduction of time and cost of design and construction, but also at the expense of a reduction in quality, aesthetic, and the art-role of architecture as a creative process. The deep-seated mass-minded processes would become

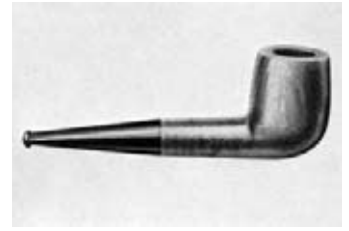


figure 4.5 "La Pipe" - the renowned image of a pipe as a utilitarian art-sculpture to which Corbusier compared a future archetype for architecture (Corbusier 2007)



figure 4.3, Figure 4.4 Above - The Ford Model T factory designed by Albert Kahn in 1910 is a rightful example of mechanized architecture. 37 years later Corbusier's Unite d'Habitation housing projects would be built over a period of 18 years in accordance with the same inclination toward efficiency (Gartman 2009, Kahn 2010, Corbusier 2010).

embodied in architecture, and the built environment synchronized to an ideology of efficiency. Adapting to expanding needs of production and consumption, architecture would consolidate a visual order of efficiency and instrumentalism emerging in the United States at that time (Gartman 2009). The negative consequences of a reduction in quality and aesthetic in form, material, and space permeated the built environments the American public inhabits today.

4.1.2 American Urban Environments: Frameworks for a Dissociated Society

The manifestation of the social isolation paradigm in the built environment was established as a framework for the design of most American cities amid the Industrial Revolution. In their infancy, American cities neglected the human condition in favor of industry and in doing so, developed almost as machines - proportioned, standardized and efficient, particularly regarding gridded land distribution. Urban property was speculated as an immediate financial commodity rather than the foundation for a future community. Many city centers became unlivable simply as a result of industrial soot and pollution.

The American city was design-less, but in a good way, as it gave us choice. Any parcel of land was free to become what its owner wished. However, at the same time, any intersection in the grid could succumb to heavy traffic, any corner could become a major business corner (Mumford 1961). It was a reasonable, democratic method if it were not for the mechanical grid systems and the ensuing dense infill of the spaces the grid defined. Gartman describes the machine-city as follows: "*Such empty frameworks of standardize, rectilinear proportions*

were not new to the American landscape. They had emerged early on as a symbol of America's ambition to turn the space of nature into a standardized commodity for human exchange...Disregarding the heterogeneous feature of the topography, the surveyor's transit slashed the land into a grid of homogeneous units of exchange value" (Gartman 2009). We are what we build, and consequently the urban experience in America became somewhat machine-like. For example, cities were sprawled, designed at the scale of the automobile rather than the human for walkability, streets devoured gridded circulation spaces and pedestrians were restricted to narrow sidewalks. The urban experience became a collection of automated systems, as Lewis Mumford summarizes describing the pattern of the automobile: *"The whole organization of the metropolitan community is designed to kill spontaneity and self-direction. You stop on a red light and go on the green"* (Mumford 1961). In the context of mass-minded systems, the American city evolved around spaces that supported movement, which consequently minimized opportunities for social encounter, and de-emphasized the formation of open social spaces. People were forced to adapt to the speed of the city and its relentless movement as if it never stops and there are no limits to its motion. The language we use to describe social encounter adapted as well - we no longer *meet* someone, we *run* into them. We wanted jobs and industry in the United States and rightly so, but as a consequence the city unintentionally became insensitive to human interaction, and the urban environment gradually forfeited its role as an inhabitable social center. With the saturation of nationally recognized media - brands, advertising, and the international style of architecture - American cities became somewhat homogeneous. Think of the popular cities of the United States, in terms of design and space, what makes them well-liked?

Likely it's the cause of some geographical feature, water or mountains or otherwise, that disrupts their grids, and in doing so, gives the city a glimpse of something spontaneous, organic, and ultimately relatable. *"Despite the frenetic movement, it was as if one did not move...It did not even matter where one was, which city,"* writes Beatriz Colomina. (Colomina 1994). Concerning the built environment, surrounded by buildings, the American urban dweller was placeless; surrounded by people, the American urban dweller was isolated. It is not as though

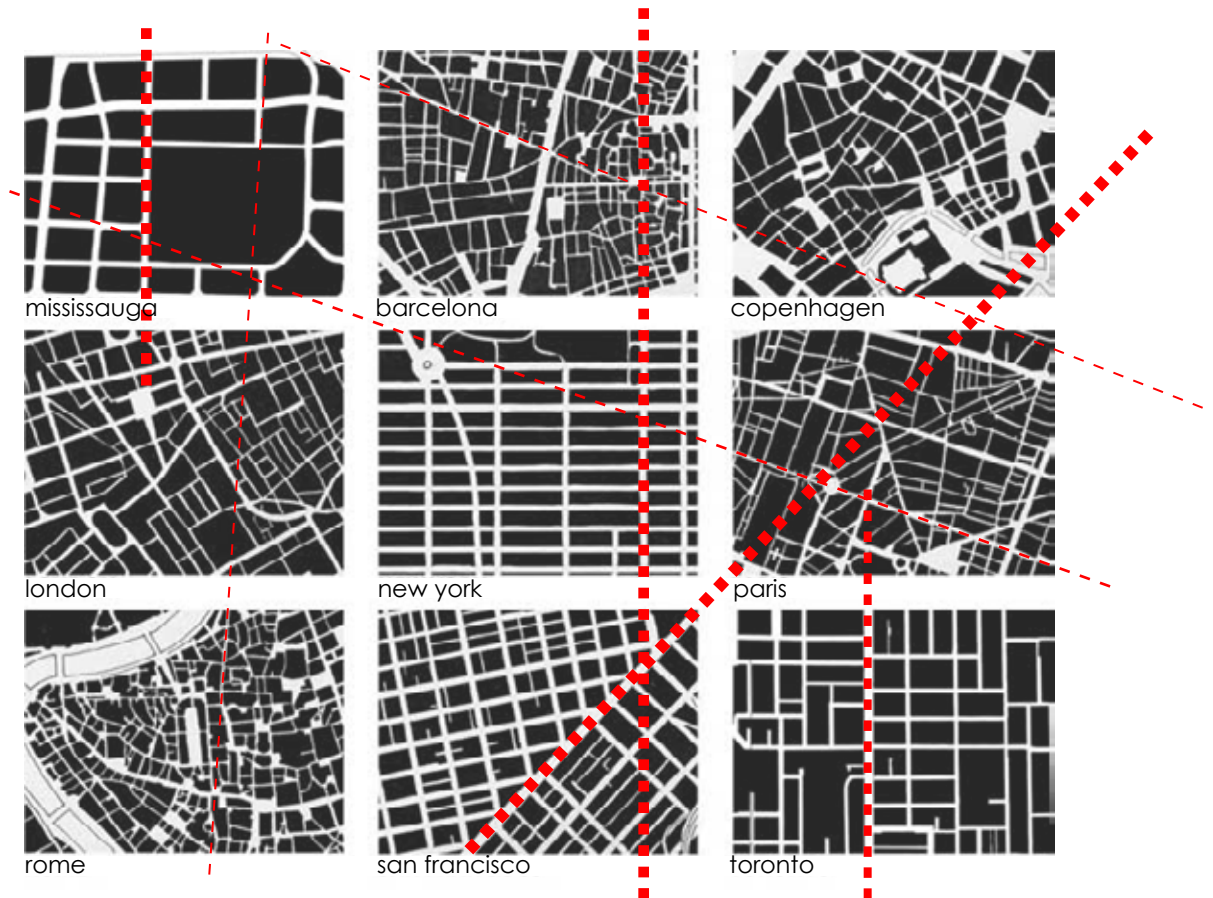


figure 4.6 figure/ground diagrams of the urban landscape of cities design before and after the existence of mass-minded processes

isolation was the intention of the city's design. Undoubtedly we gleaned many benefits from this design approach. But in doing so, isolation gradually emerged as the city embodied the outcome of the cultural priorities existing when the urban condition was realized, such as mass media.

Through figure/ground technique, *Figure 4.6* illustrates the difference between pre-mass-minded cities such as Rome or Copenhagen and post-mass-minded American cities such as New York and San Francisco. Even with the understanding of the difference in the amount of time these cities had to evolve, the contrast in the initial planning frameworks in each city is unmistakable. Distinctions in diversity, character, and open social space of a city designed at the human scale such as Rome relative to the space devoted to circulation and the automobile in New York are self-evident. The streets themselves describe these characteristics. The stradas of Rome compress to limit automobile traffic in favor of walkability, and expand to create social spaces of piazzas, naturally, as space for the automobile was a retrofit for Rome. For New York, aside from the occasional broad street or diagonal connector, the grid is uniform, acting more as a single-function corridor than an inhabitable space (Mumford 1961). There are lessons to be learned for each city regarding the other.

Despite its unambiguous purpose for movement, the grid itself gradually became the open spaces in the American city as the properties delineated by its boundaries were densified with buildings. In 1885, we began making better use of urban space with the creation of the world's first skyscraper, The Home Insurance Building, in Chicago, Illinois. Consequently, this marked a new beginning for the

social isolation paradigm in urban architecture, as urban dwellers were detached from the social setting of the ground plane. Socially speaking, the automobile unintentionally corrupted the ground plane, and the skyscraper unintentionally corrupted the sky, each making the other all the less socially viable. As described in the Pittsburgh study in *chapter two*, the built environment would sync to the service industry as production and manufacturing industries faded in cities across the United States. This caused a boom in the number of high-rise office and residential buildings constructed. The move restored the economy of the city, but consequently deterred small-scale urban communities from becoming a socially-connected society because the established social public spaces were now hundreds of feet below them at street level. Although this movement proved successful in some instances, in other cases it was a failure. For example, In 1954, the urban ground plane detachment melded with mass-production of buildings to create the eventual failed community of the Pruitt Igoe housing project in St. Louis, Missouri. Pruitt Igoe was a master plan of thirty-three homogeneous high-rise housing complexes created to address housing needs in the city. Along with the paradigms that informed the design of Pruitt Igoe, isolation was explicit in its zoning as the high-rises were intended for low-income families, which were further segregated to different buildings by race (Checkoway 1985). Pruitt Igoe would be demolished over the course of four years just sixteen years after the thirty-three building project was completed (Wright 2007). Recently, the buildings in our cities attempted to grow taller, as with the Chicago Spire project, which with recent economic decline construction has been put on a hold (see *Figure 4.8*).



figure 4.7 Demolition of the Pruitt Igoe housing complex within sixteen years of its finished construction (Pruitt Igoe 2011)

With the embodiment of the social isolation paradigm in space an

form came also its explicit manifestation in architectural aesthetic. As illustrated by Corbusier's Maison Domino diagram, when the building skin was no longer burdened by a responsibility to structure, it became free to expression, including mass media advertising. Our built environments not only embodied the social isolation paradigm of mass media, but acted as an open canvas to become mass media itself. (The use of architecture as media was not a new concept of the early

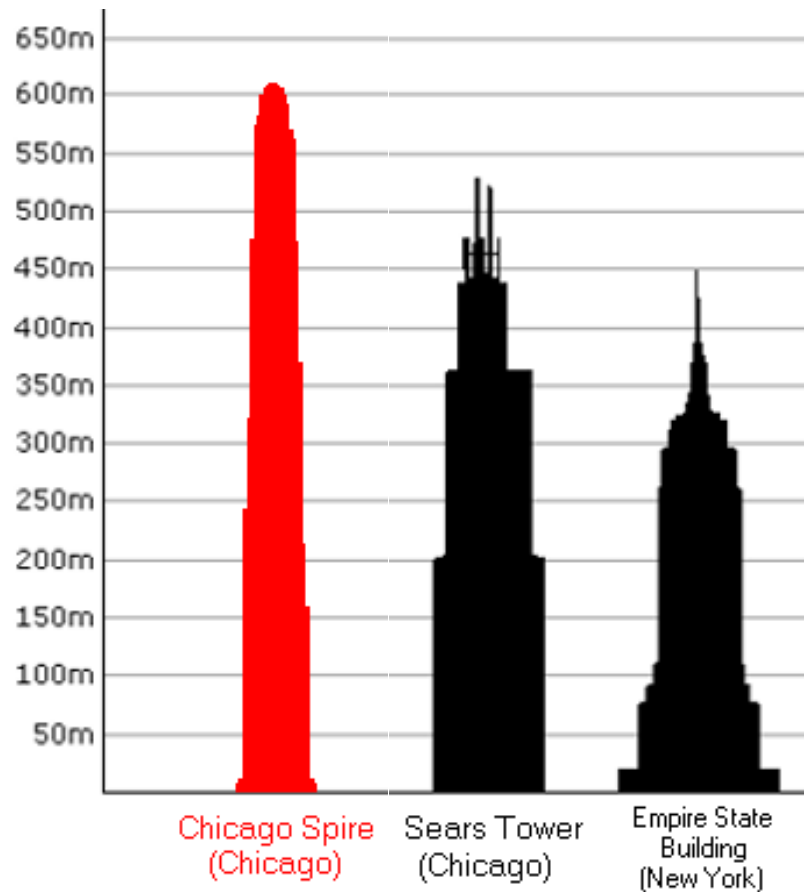


figure 4.8 Diagram of the world's tallest buildings from the 1931 Empire State Building at 1,250 feet tall to the 2009 Burj Khalifa (formerly known as the Burj Dubai) at 2,717 feet tall (World's Tallest Buildings 2011).

twentieth century, as building facades had been used to tell cultural narratives for thousands of years prior. The visual narrative of modern architecture is equally representative of culture. However, the context of the narrative to be an advertisement and the means for broadcasting it have entirely changed). The free facade became a billboard. The practice began as early as the modernist movement when facades became clean enough to support such images. Although mass media facade systems are ubiquitous today (Tokyo, Japan, for example), the pinnacle of architecture as mass media in the United States is New York City's Times Square. Times Square is a public space defined by architecture that is saturated with mass media advertising as seen in *Figure 4.10*. Like newspapers, radio, television, and billboards before it, the built environment evolved to not only synchronize to mass media, but became the communicative medium itself. From the beginning of the nineteenth century on, American urban spaces were



figure 4.9 Image of Times Square - a now pedestrian public space contained by architecture saturated with mass media advertising (Times Square Poster 2011).



figure 4.10 Fading advertisements painted on the sides of buildings in Chicago, Illinois (Fading Ads 2011)

treated less as public institutions and more as a private commercial ventures (Mumford 1961).

As epitomized by Times Square, The social spaces the American city created or attempted to preserve were influenced by mass-minded processes. Public spaces evolved into private plazas, such as the transformation of open urban space to the private corporate plaza. The open space at the foot of a skyscraper, with a few scattered benches and perhaps a fountain or extraneous sculpture, symbolizes only an illusion of a public plaza as a strictly regulated private space. Author Setha Low suggests that this was the case for Bryant Park and Union Square in New York City, where a partnership between municipality and private business reduced these spaces to safe, homogenous, middle-class environments under strict surveillance and police authority (Low 2000). If we think of well-known public spaces across the United States, certainly there are successful spaces such as Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland, Oregon. However, then consider how many others are associated with private ownership even by title - *Times Square*, New York, named after *The New York Times* newspaper, *Ghirardelli Square*, San Francisco, named after the famous Ghirardelli Chocolate Company, or *Mellon Square*, Pittsburgh, named after the famous banker Richard King Mellon. Certainly the cities benefited from the introduction and preservation of open space, but the interactions which can take place in these spaces are regulated. In her book entitled *On the Plaza*, Setha Low describes the transformation of American urban space as she writes: "*There has been considerable concern about the demise of public space in the United States: civic spaces are no longer democratic places where all people are embraced and tolerated, but instead centers*

of commerce and consumption. The public's reaction to the loss of public space has been so dramatic that new communities such as Celebration, the Disney Company's (recall from chapter three that the Walt Disney Company is the third largest media conglomerate in the United States) residential development in Florida, are being designed as ersatz versions of small-town America, including a town hall and a central square. Even the Chicago suburb of Schaumburg, Illinois, a place synonymous with mall culture, is building a central square in search of a sense of place, "a sort of civic soul." But these suburban public spaces lack the diversity and complexity that residents seek, becoming theme-parked versions of an idealized original" (Low 2000). In this excerpt, Low summarizes the existing condition of public space and the ensuing collective reaction to public space. Commodified



figure 4.11 Image of the central public space in Celebration, Florida, a suburban residential community designed by the Walt Disney Company (Celebrations, Florida 2011).

public spaces are an architectural manifestation of Žižek's summation of media-influenced human behavior with the phrase *first as tragedy, then as farce* - the dissolution of public space being the tragedy, and its nostalgic revival being the farce. Planned suburban spaces such as Celebration, Florida, serve as the quintessential architectural specimen for analyzing de-socialized communal living and cultural recycling. They embody an attempt to combine the *once was* with the *now is*, consequently lacking the democratic qualities of the public space it mimics. Through comparable efforts, the eventuation of the average American suburb community would become a domestic framework for neighborhoods that ultimately fall victim to a similar condition of homogenization.



figure 4.12 Aerial image of Seaside, Florida, (commonly known as the setting for the film *The Truman Show*) another designed utopian community which attempts to re-create the civic plaza as an act of nostalgia. The design is physically reminiscent of good space, but lacks necessary social components of diversity and discourse in its use (Seaside, Florida 2011).

4.2.0 The Social Nightmare of the American Dream

The ideology of self-governance does not exist without repercussions. When individuals act in pursuit of their own interests there are collective consequences, the same holds true for the opposite. The endeavors of one generation resonate as a set of circumstances for the next generation. We are what we build, and so the built environment chronicles this cultural reverberation. For instance, the search for personal autonomy in the United States gave rise to mass production in the automobile industry as cars granted the individual a level of mobility that was otherwise unimaginable. The automobile became the primary means of transportation, necessitating a synchronization to the automobile technology in the built environment rather than more sociable conditions.

The natural but contradictory nature of this self-determination is its foundational role as the originator of institutionalized consequences that limit autonomy in the future. Reacting to the uninhabitable urban environment, The search for autonomy of dwelling through mass-minded processes would cause society to endure a fate foreshadowed by the automated city. In pursuit of self-determined residence, housing and residential space in the United States, like the automobile, would be subject to mass-minded processes - an accidental movement toward further isolation. Accidental because here it is important to understand that repercussions of social isolation in the built environment are discernible only with the advantage of reflection and hindsight. We *wanted* cars, we *wanted* affordable housing, we *wanted* access to land and nature - and why not? However, we could not have known the social repercussions of these pursuits as an inherent consequence of mass-minded processes. These spaces were not designed for isolation, but became isolating as a manifestation of the underlying social structures

existing during their origination. As Žižek suggests, with hindsight we begin to see these underlying social structures as tragedy and then understand them as farce. In this way, it is not the true American dream of individual liberty and choice being critiqued, more so, it is the mass media subversion of the idea and its architectural embodiment being analyzed as anti-social architecture. The tragedy being the dream's subversion, the farce being this subversion's embodiment.

4.2.1 Suburban America: A Collective Effort to Lead a Private Life

The collective response to the machine-city, of an urban environment that disregarded the human condition, was a mass migration from its setting. New York City experienced this beginning in 1834, when Brooklyn Heights became the initial mass-scale installation of a social isolation paradigm as the United State's first suburban community. Up until the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the primary movement of the population was from rural to the city, but as Russel Wright indicates in his book *The Chronology of Housing in the United States*: "*Then a movement from the central cities to their suburbs slowly developed and eventually became a rushing tide in the twentieth century*" (Wright 2007). The mass exodus to the suburbs was the separation of a city-part from its whole, the detachment of a population from its social center. This movement toward tranquility was particularly popular following the return of soldiers from World War II (Wright 2007). The suburb granted individuals commodities that the city could not provide - space, autonomy, nature, hygiene, among others - qualities we pursued because they are inextinguishable human needs. The architecture and space of the original suburbs would

reflect the necessary delights of the human condition, which the built environment of the city inadvertently forfeited. The departure from the city was justifiable as an escape from commercialism to humanism, but this revived concept of urban-fringe habitation would soon come with a high social cost (Mumford 1961).

Despite the original, positive intentions of suburban formation, like the American city, the deep-seated mass-minded processes would manifest and the social isolation paradigm would initiate in the suburban lifestyle as well. With their escalating popularity came commercial interest, and like the regimentation of the urban landscape as gridded space, suburbs would evolve to become planned residential communities. The tragedy was the need to leave the social center of the city, the embodiment of mass media ideology as planned communities emerged as the farce.



figure 4.14 Image of mass-produced housing in a planned suburban community in Florida (Human Landscapes 2011).

In 1923, Riverdale, New Jersey, became the test subject of residential mechanization by pairing the social detachment of the suburb with the construction technologies of mass-production, which would transform Riverdale into the first planned community (Wright 2007).

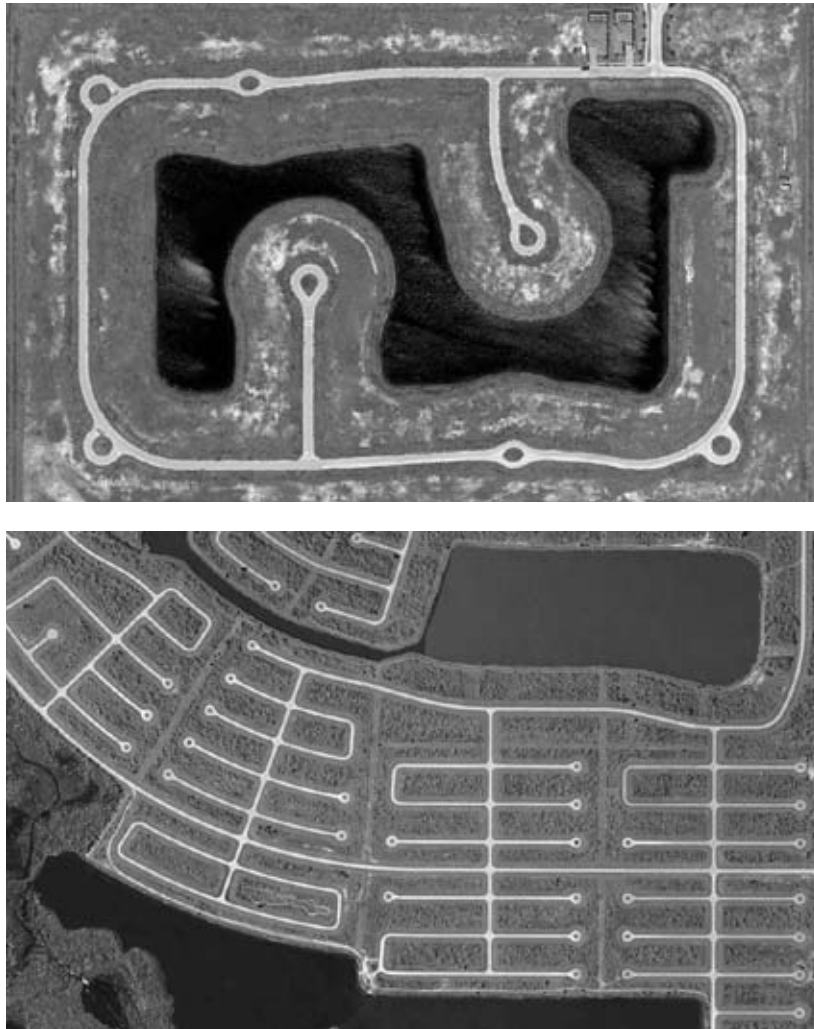


figure 4.15 Aerial images of planned suburban communities during and prior to development. (Human Landscapes 2011).

The planned communities were romanticized by media, and suburban sprawl ensued with a boom in population in the mid-twentieth century. *“The early romantic suburb was a middle-class effort to find a private solution for the depression and disorder of the befouled metropolis: an effusion of romantic taste but an evasion of civic responsibility and municipal foresight, writes Mumford, Though the retreat from the city held manifest the advantages for health and family life, it was equally an attempt to achieve liberation from the sometimes dreary conventions and compulsions of an urban society: an effort, given the necessary financial means, to have life on one’s own terms, even if it meant having it alone”* (Mumford 1961). It was not long before the terms *planned community* and suburb became interchangeable. While the suburb kept the busier, dirtier enterprises of the urban environment at a distance, it unfortunately simultaneously disregarded the creative activities of the city. As a result, suburban life gradually became less dynamic and diversified; less full of unforeseen challenges and dilemmas. The biological benefits of the suburb unknowingly came with these negative psychological and social consequences of its inhabitation. The suburban life became a subculture, an irreality as it consciously and subconsciously segregated people by class. From this the term *white flight* was born, which describes the nature of segregative population shift from urban to rural (Colomina 1994). With a greater population living in these conditions, cross-cultural, cross-social, cross-class interactions were mitigated. Such interactions became out of sight and out of mind. To an extent, certain civic and collective responsibilities were inevitably and incidentally forfeited. Tragically, one could live out an entire life in the suburbs without spoiling the illusion of an innocent world save what the television or newspaper depicted. This brought the mass media isolation paradigm

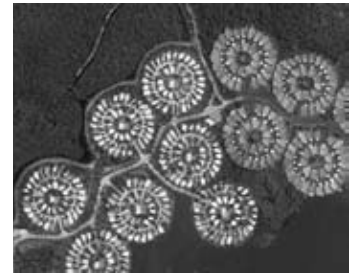


figure 4.16 human landscapes of suburban communities in Florida (Human Landscapes 2011)

full circle through the gradual development of a dependence on media for even the most local of information (Mumford 1961).

The mass-minded architecture of the planned communities became institutionalized as generations were born and raised in the suburban environment. It worked well for early suburbs that remained connected to a natural setting offering an environment where children could play and learn without supervision or worry by parents. The environment, built and unbuilt, provided opportunities for extracurricular learning. This beauty and attraction of the unbuilt space was a benefit the city could not offer. But as these suburbs transitioned to planned communities, the natural setting enjoyed by original American suburbs was replaced by artificial landscapes of grass yards, flower gardens, intentionally placed greenery and man-made lakes. The environment itself became a setting for compulsive play at the disregard of vital spontaneity, stimulus and diversity. The charm of the planned suburban landscape simultaneously distracted from external education opportunities. Even the most dilapidated industrial town had educational opportunities that the suburbs soon lacked. The physical environment evolved to become as predictable and uninspiring as what the television could provide. A greater dependence was placed on the public school system for teaching children. Education became substantially formalized and routine. Generations of suburban youth circulating through the American education system would receive the same education, compounding homogeneity with the passing of each generation. As generations passed in the planned suburban communities, underlying trades and forfeits were being made - vitality was traded for safety, spontaneity was forfeited for tranquility, impulsiveness was traded for calculated, instinct was suppressed by discipline. The concept of

planned took on both a literal and figurative meaning in suburbia for both its physical layout and the environment's effect on the behavior of its inhabitants as a result of mass-minded processes. The accidental plague of the average America populace would become well-ordered boredom (Mumford 1961).

4.2.2 The Nuclear Family, the Commodified Lifestyle

The cultural homogeneity, cultural consumption, and cultural recycling advocated by mass media would become explicitly manifested in the built environment of the planned suburban community. Isolated, mass media culture and suburban culture grew to become one in the same. *The suburb served as an asylum for the preservation of an illusion* (Mumford 1961). The illusion was the portrayal of the archetypical nuclear American family created by mass media consumerism. Two kids, a full yard, a two car garage, a white picket fence - The social isolation paradigm promoted a desire to live a life of exclusivity that was embodied in planned communities. The mass production of houses chronicled and perpetuated social isolation and cultural homogeneity by placing identical housing models in solitude of one another. The shared walls and spaces of urban dwellings were replaced with void interstitial spaces of lawns and streets between homes, which are segregated by shrubbery and fences. Like the urban environment before it, mass-minded processes had inadvertently suburban life changed *community* to be a noun, a *place*, people were *in* a community but necessarily *part* of a community. The suburb was the manifestation of mass-systems' movement toward an aggregation of individuals.

In terms of sociability, urban and suburban environments were the same. The difference was a geographic displacement of the population from the cultural, social, and economic heart of the urban environment. Physically removed from the social center of the city, the suburban lifestyle magnified a dependence on the automobile. The automobile alleviated the geographical detachment from the city, but the social detachment was only reinforced. Robert Putnam's research shows an inverse relationship between daily commute and social engagement, noting that every ten minutes spent in daily travel correlates to a ten percent decrease in community involvement (Putnam 2001). The chance social encounter with a neighbor was removed with the isolation of individuals into separate automobiles, and further separation occurred by placing these automobiles into personal garages. Mass-minded architecture was sympathetic to the technologies that were de-humanizing and de-socializing our daily lives. The normalization of this process, the gradual institutionalization of isolating architecture, is what made these repercussions difficult to be aware of at the time of their origination, and negated much possibility of halting the movement.

While mass-minded systems created homogenous housing, Mass media turned these houses into a commodity for curbing boredom and idleness. Competitive spending on ornamentation and decorations emerged as a mass media ritual to veil the homogeneity. Seasons and holidays would be exploited and commercialized by mass media to profit from the ensuing consumerism. As Stewart Brand writes: *"Form follows funding. If people have money to spare, they will mess with their building, at minimum to show off their wealth, on the reasonable theory that money attracts money. A building is not*

primarily a building; it is primarily property, and as such, subject to the whims of the market...Buildings are treated by fashion as big, difficult clothing, always lagging embarrassingly behind the mode of the day... and fashion is culture-wide and inescapable” (Brand 1994). Suburban houses would embody Baudrillard’s media theory of cultural recycling. The wreath on the door, the extravagance of the outdoor lighting at Christmas time, the color of the house, the new false facade - these were activities promoted by mass media permeated the American cultural landscape, and domestic residential vernacular architecture. We are what we build, and the built environment steadily became a framework in which mass media could more successfully operate.

Competitive consumerism was not only apparent in the aesthetic of the house but influenced its spaces, as well. The key was square footage.



figure 4.18 Images of typical over-sized, mass produced mcmansion homes (McMansion 2011)

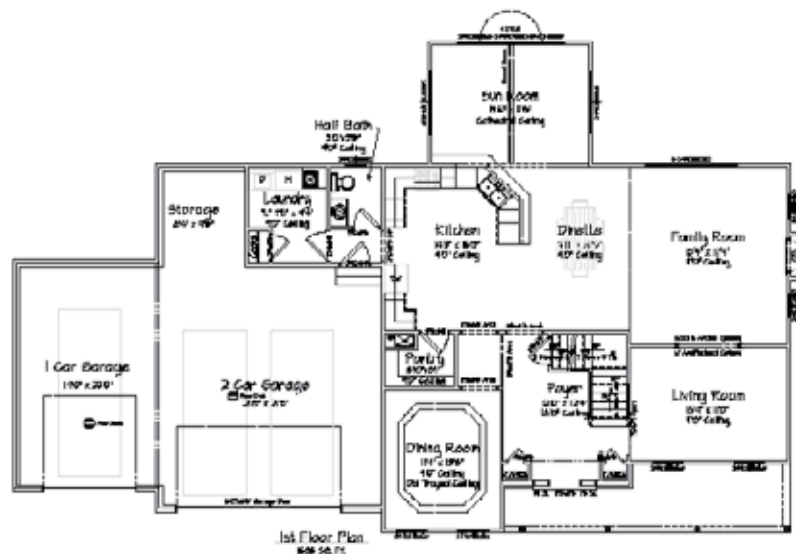


figure 4.17 Typical floor plan of a mass-produced home in a planned community. Single use spaces and a delineation of television placement are apparent in this design. (House Floor Plan 2011).

Square footage is the metric by which the monetary value of a home is assessed, and mass-produced suburban houses had a lot of it. As an embodiment of cultural recycling or the *keeping up with the Joneses*



2.0 cars per household
in the united states



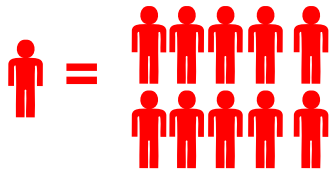
2.9 televisions per
household in the united states



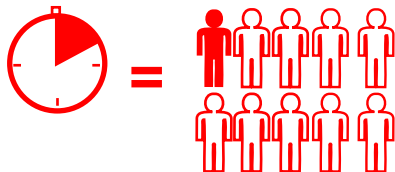
1/2 of all television
watching is done alone



80% of americans spend
their evenings after dinner engaged
with the television in some way



1 hour of television
watching correlates to a **10 hour**
decrease in civic involvement



10 minutes
in a daily commute correlates to a
10 percent decrease in community
involvement

figure 4.19 Statistics on media usage and its
social consequences (Putnam 2001).

mentality, these homes were unendearingly nicknamed *mcmansions*. The mcmansion can now be understood as the architectural metaphor of the mass media era as the preeminent manifestation of the social isolation paradigm. The average home in the United States in 1990 was approaching 2,500 square feet, while the average number of people in the house was 2.7 people, so the average individual living in a single family home at that time had nearly one thousand square feet of living space. Primarily the square footage was delineated toward single-function spaces of personal bedrooms, a family room, a dining room, multiple bathrooms, a den, a foyer, etc, to expand the home making it seem more grandiose than reality confessed (see *Figure 4.15* for a typical mcmansion floor plan). In pursuit of *more*, There was little reason, culturally speaking, to make a space multi-functional if it was financially viable not to do so (among other consumables, The same *bigger is better* attitude was advertised with automobiles at this time too). The result of this expansion was an isolating floor plan. Rooms were specific to individual family members as bedrooms, dens, offices - tragically, a family could spend an entire day in these inflated dwellings and never interact. Part of this spatial delineation occurred with the widespread acceptance of media technologies. Domestic residential architecture was syncing to mass media technologies - primarily the television, which now demanded its own room (Brand 1994). The average American household today has 2.9 televisions, more than one per person per household (The Nielson Company 2011). It comes as no surprise to remember that one half of all television watching is done alone (Putnam 2001). The excess space allows for individual social isolation, reinforced by the television and perpetuated by its broadcast. The social isolation paradigm had managed to segregate the public long before we even turned on the

television. Spatial layout allowed individuals to isolate in to separate rooms, and a television may keep us there.

Within these spaces, unintended consequences of the deep-seated mass-minded processes reshaped and de-socialized domestic rituals. For example, the simple act of creating and eating a family meal was replaced by fast food. The end was accomplished, but the means to the end was devalued (Feenberg 1991). Like the replacement of local economy for a mass-minded system, the mass replacement of the individual or communal process of *making* is where the social components of daily activity were lost, inadvertently affecting the social welfare of the individual, the family, and the community.

The home in which I was raised during this period from 1994 to 2005 exemplified the condition of the modern mass media/architecture relationship. It was approximately a three thousand square foot house. I recall as a child visiting an already built version of the home in an exhibition in Virginia prior to ours being constructed in Pennsylvania. We did not live in a traditional planned community, but the context of the housing development was much the same. The house had two dining rooms, a living room, a family room, four bedrooms, three bathrooms, an inhabitable basement, a two car garage - all for a family of four. We each had our own space as bedrooms, but the three floors provided secondary spaces for detached cohabitation. In addition to private spaces, the house had five televisions - one in three out of four bedrooms on the second floor, one on the ground floor, and one in the basement. I recall on several occasions three televisions playing at once in three separate spaces for three separate audiences, sometimes four, on three separate floors of the house. Visiting friends

in their homes, in neighborhoods of equivalent class, social status, race and partisanship, the physical environment and milieu was much the same. Social interaction between neighbors occurred mostly by a wave of hands as our cars passed on the street, or by chance encounter of getting the mail while one passes down the street walking his or her dog. In either case, the lack of social encounter was not out of disinterest, but that the environment did not easily lend itself to eventuating interaction. Admittedly, I had a very fortunate upbringing. Only in hindsight am I aware of the behavioral impact my environment - my neighborhood and home, media, and mass-minded systems had on my youth.

What I learned of American suburban architecture in the mass media era, in application to this thesis and the social isolation paradigm, is a correspondence between my personal experience and the findings of Robert Putnam's research on the dissolution of communal behavior relative to the rise in popularity of mass media systems - *one half of all television watching is done alone, eighty percent of Americans spend their evening hours engaged with the television, and one hour of television watching correlates to a ten hour decrease in civic involvement. The television went from a commodity in ten percent of American households to ninety percent over a period of only nine years, and society spends over forty percent of its leisure time engaged with the television, and eighty percent of Americans spend their after dinner time engaged with the television in some way* (Putnam 2001).

It is important again to emphasize that these were not intended consequences of mass-minded processes. We *wanted* privacy, space, individuality, etc. because to an extent, these are also intrinsic

human needs. The purpose of this section is to show the unintended social consequences of pursuing these desires in the context of mass-minded systems, and the development of mass media to address these needs, which shed its own set of social consequences. This is not suggest that people are at the mercy of mass media, consumerism or commodification. More so it is an attempt to articulate these concepts and their preceding mass-minded processes to have developed over time into social institutions, which, for better or worse, innately govern aspects of individual and collective behavior.

4.3.0 Longevity of the Built Environment: Perpetuating the Anti-Social

In an effort to keep pace with the national economy, American cities like Pittsburgh and Detroit over-specialized with an industrial synchronization to a particular technology, and the built environment embodied that coordination. The technologies became obsolete or unsupported, and the cities were left to deal with the burden of the over-specialized architectural corpses that had once defined the economic vigor of the city in their time of use. The social condition of these communities struggle to progress in spite of the broken state of the built environment, which served only to lag that progress as an institution of an antiquated purpose. The over-sizing of mcmansion homes serves as a microcosm of this urban dilemma. Upkeep of the home is dependent on the owner who more often than not, is specializing in a single means of acquiring a specific level of income to maintain it. The home grows, but because of an economic shift, it has suddenly grown beyond the owner's financial capacity to maintain it. Too large for the new social condition, the home falls into disrepair, lagging the owner in multiple ways (Brand 1994). Underlying the mcmansion and the local developments of these two cities were the mass-minded processes, the social isolation paradigm, and a national synchronization to mass-minded technologies. The result of this national synchronization is a general homogeneity in the urban environment of American cities as they forfeited diversity for a part in the national economy. As Pittsburgh and Detroit previously modeled, what will become of this national urban synchronization when components of mass-minded technologies become obsolete or de-emphasizes? Will our cities lag us?

The remainder of this thesis is an exploration of a hypothesis that considers the plight of Pittsburgh and Detroit to be a microcosm of a developing social circumstance in the United States. Although

the architectural frameworks of American cities were derived from a deep-seated process formed centuries ago, as discussed in this chapter, remnants of these institutions are still evident in the built environment today. They *are* the built environment today. Planned communities, skyscrapers, high-rise housing, automobile-scaled urban environments, and mass-produced mcmansion homes all continue to be built as embodiments of what is becoming an antiquated social isolation paradigm perpetuated by mass media and the built

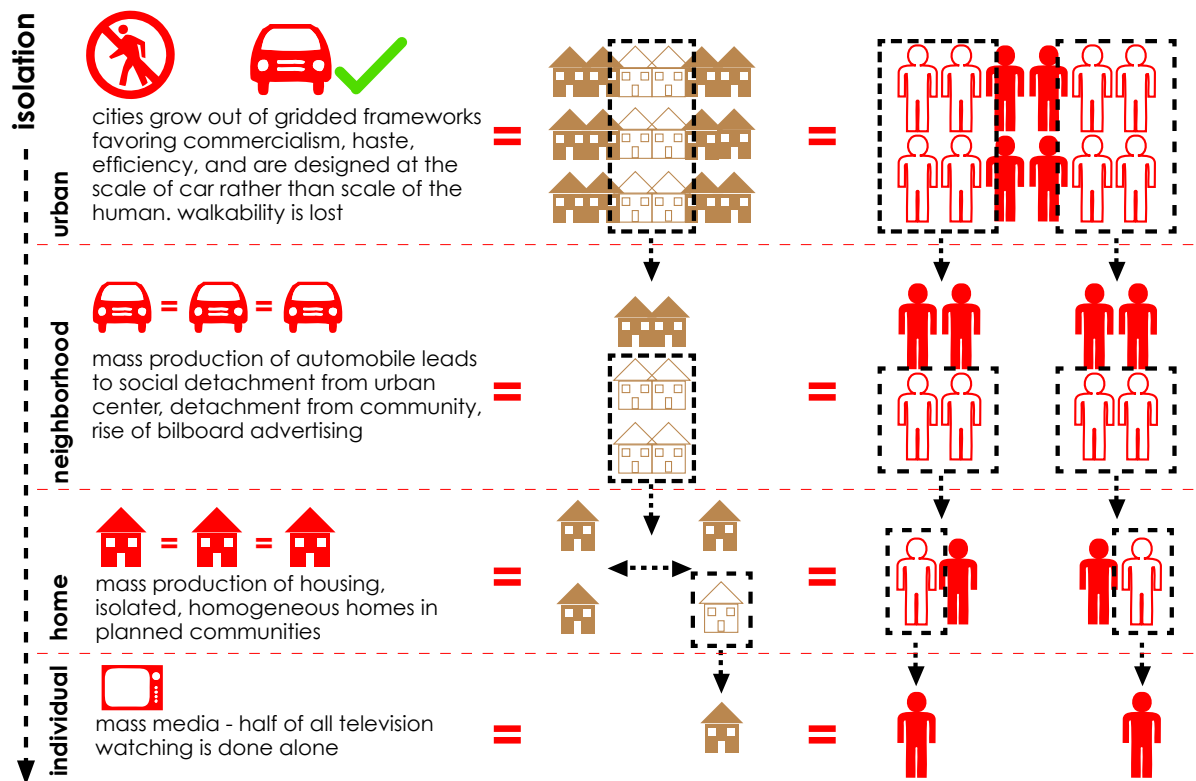


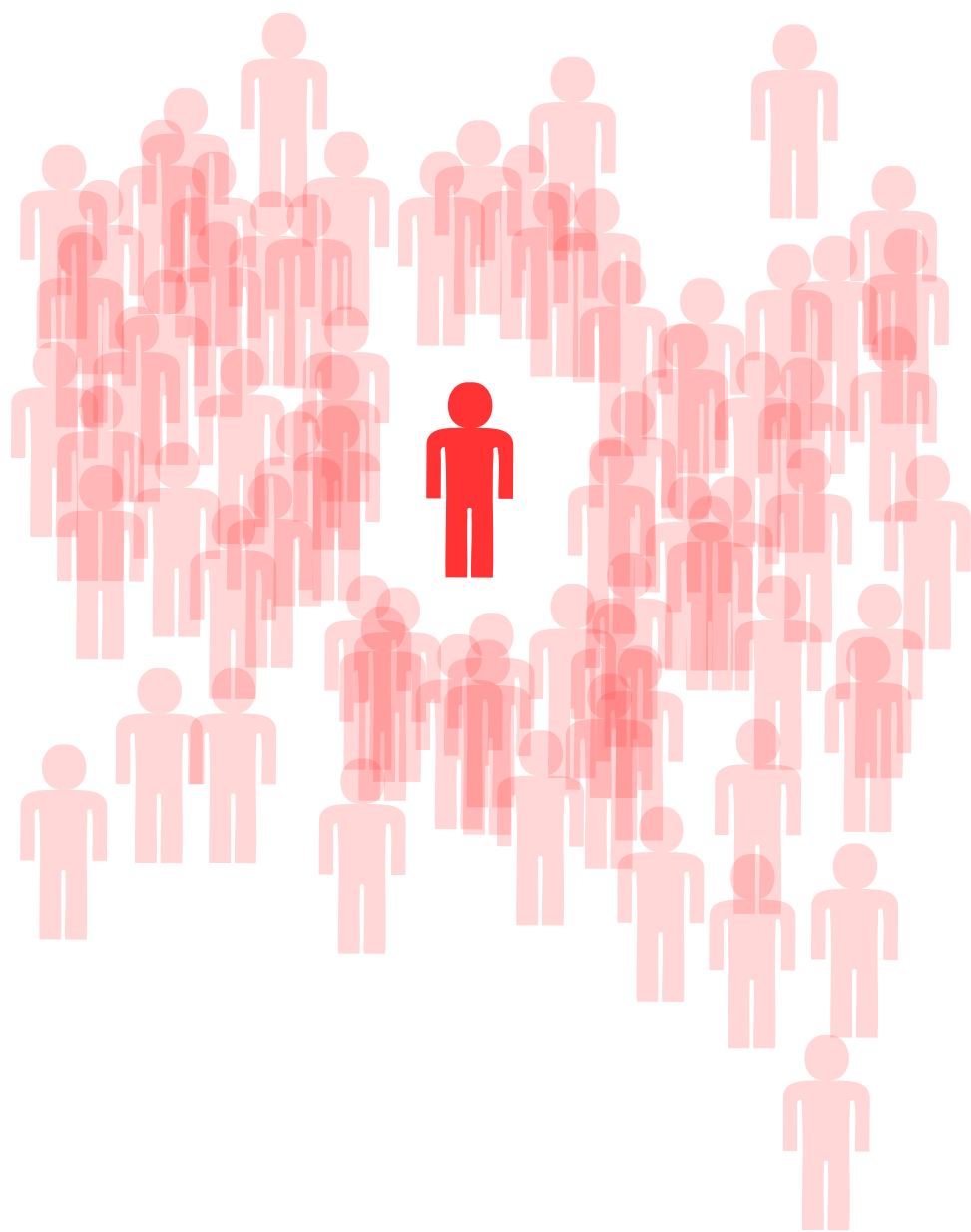
figure 4.20 Scales of social isolation (urban, neighborhood, home and the individual) paring society down to the isolated individual

environment itself. The longevity of the built environment only further perpetuates the influence of these isolation paradigms on the collective conscious as enduring remnants of their physical manifestation. Regarding the negative consequences of mass-minded processes, the social isolation paradigm created a framework for architecture in the nineteenth and twentieth century that became institutionalized in the way we shape the built environment today. Does the bias of the built environment toward its original purpose impede future progress? This is architecture as an institution.

However, times are changing.

The focus of the remainder of this thesis suggests that the cultural effects of the social isolation paradigm are at the onset of diminishing, and statistical data on public use of the built environment reinforces this notion. This is to suggest that in the context of periodization, contemporary society is amid the early stages of a collective paradigm shift away from institutions of social isolation such as mass media, with the understanding that such a shift is a time-laden process of generation to generation changeover. The perceived catalyst for this paradigm shift is what Douglas Rushkoff refers to as *new Renaissance technologies* of social media, and a growing *social integration* paradigm. The potential for this cultural reconditioning raises several questions about the circumstances of the built environment - what will be the relationship between a future, digitally-connected society and today's established, anti-social built environment? How will urban environments, buildings and spaces adapt to or impede this emerging culture? What purpose will buildings serve in a world where physical space is no longer required for social interaction? Before

addressing questions concerning the future of social spaces in the built environment, like the study of mass media, it is necessary to first understand what social media is, where it comes from, and how it is being used.



CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL MEDIA: THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION PARADIGM



Chapter Five: Social Media: The Social Integration Paradigm

Similar to the chronological investigation of mass media in *chapter three*, this chapter threads contemporary social media back through time to its origination in deep-seated mass-minded process, that promotes methods of interaction and technologies of telecommunications. The mass-minded process spurring social media is mass communication. The historical context of social media provides a context for discussing contemporary social media, its positive and negative characteristics relative to mass media development, and its potential to institutionalize a social integration paradigm that could have a considerable effect toward reshaping the American cultural landscape and inevitably reshaping the built environment.

5.1.0 Evolution of Social Media: An Institution for Social Integration

Tracing modern mass media back through history uncovers its ancestry to the deep-seated process of mass-minded social structures established in the latter years of the Renaissance period. Mass media's emergence from mass marketing and technologies of mass production shaped a pattern of social isolation ingrained in its development and utilization discernible only with future reflection on its influence. Through reflection and hypothesis, historical and future analysis of the origins of contemporary social media technologies, like mass media, reveals a similar pattern of evolution as a by-product of mass communication, but now with inherent properties of public sociability, revealing social characteristics that are more locally-minded than mass-minded.

The development and adoption of technology occurs according to an often repeated framework of steps - *prototype*, *invention*, and *diffusion*. The prototype is the formation of the idea and the technology's fabrication, the invention is its patenting and release to the market, and diffusion refers to its widespread public adoption. These three steps are quite recurrent. Between these three steps often comes *supervention* and *suppression*. Supervention is the catalyst that necessitates the technology to the further development of invention, often restricting the technology to the possession of a few independent entities. Suppression occurs before public diffusion describing the gradual inculcation of the technology into the existing cultural fabric prior to its widespread acceptance. The suppression stage is often a result of public skepticism and the adaptation of the technology to coincide with existing social norms (Winston 1998).

For major innovations such as communication technologies, the interval

between the stages of prototype, supervision, invention, suppression and diffusion were years, often decades. Frequently upwards of more than a century would pass between prototype and diffusion, though this gap narrows through the advancement of periodization. Threading them back through history, The suppression and diffusion period for advancements in communications technologies would almost exclusively occur in the years following war time, the supervision or catalyst for the technology being the military conflict itself. Warfare imposed a need to communicate quickly and clandestinely regardless of geographical location at a greater efficiency than adversaries, which would stimulate the advancement of the technology through resource allocations of funding and research toward communication (Briggs 2002). The historical context of major innovations in communications technology such as the postal system, the telegraph, the telephone, satellite technology and the Internet reveals that prototypes would often lay dormant for decades until military need catalyzed their public diffusion, while simultaneously prolonging their period of suppression. However, this thesis will suggest that social media is establishing a niche as a social component in the emerging deep-seated process of sustainability (McDonough 2000, Dillard 2009).

5.1.1 History of Social Media, Telecommunications

In many ways mass media and social media grew out of the same periodic landmark in western culture, the development of the medium of language. Oration, preaching were the original mass communication methods, the sole means for disseminating news and personal communication. Messengers would memorize, travel, and orate

messages from one individual to another to accomplish long distance communication. This was especially true in ancient Greek and Roman culture, particularly in war time to deliver messages and strategies between armies. Preaching found a niche in establishing religious institutions, but also formed public speaking, civic engagements, public addresses, etc. Oral communication remained the dominant communicative medium until written language developed in the late eleventh century with the greater circulation of paper. At this point mass media and social media diverged. Mass media began using paper for newspapers and advertising, often replacing oral engagements, while social media began using paper for letters and personal communication. Oral messengers became letter carriers, and before long mail systems developed. Often the motive for the creation of the means of communication was for purposes other than connecting private individuals. This was true for the United States, in which Benjamin Franklin founded the United States Postal Service in 1775. Though the Postal Service was used for private communication, its primary function was governmental - tax collection, notices, the census, and so on, but the public benefitted regardless. The Postal Service would expand and expedite the mailing system with retired vehicles and aircrafts from the World Wars in the twentieth century (Briggs 2002).

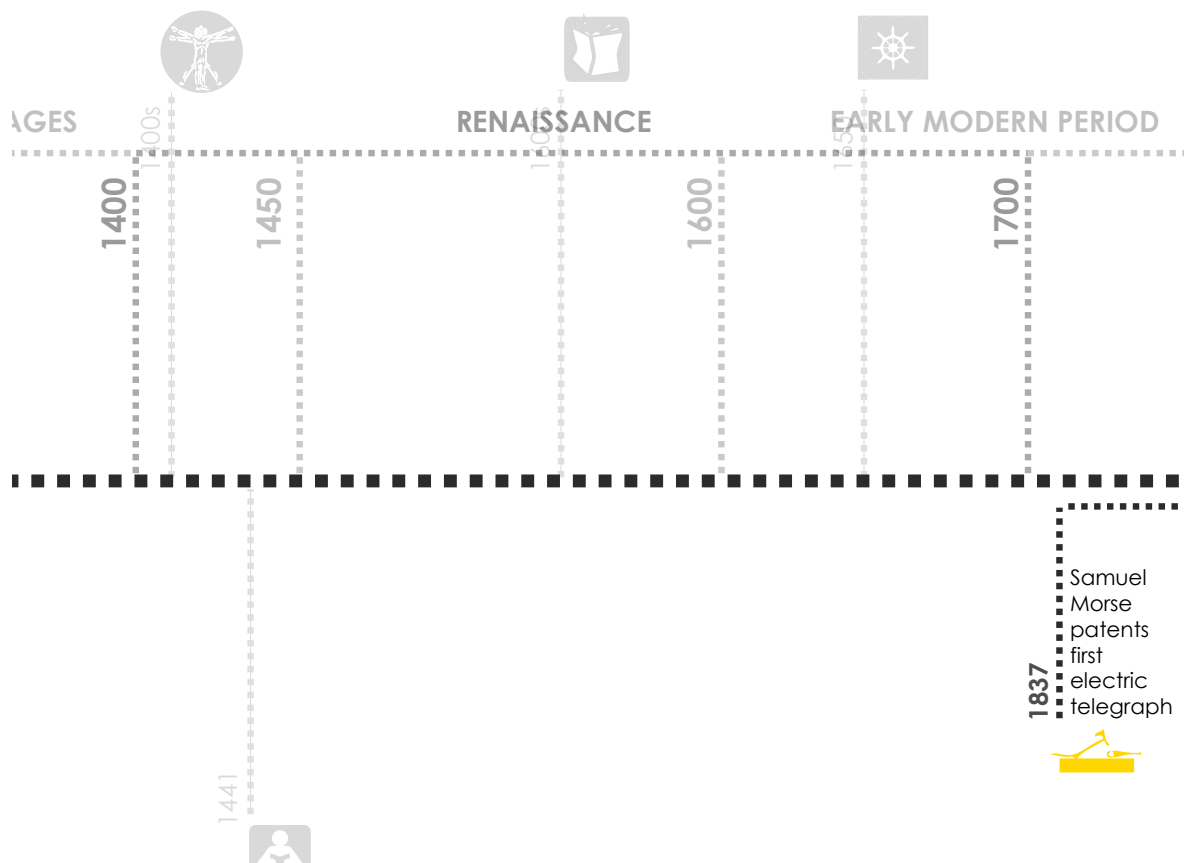
Major crossroads in communication and social media innovation would also develop out of needs that were not initially public, such as a war time necessity, but public adoption would follow initial invention. The next key change in social connection arrived with the development of electronic communication. In 1837, Samuel Morse would revolutionized the way people communicate by patenting

the first electric telegraph roughly based on a system used by the revolutionary army of the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century. Prior to this invention, long distance communication was reliant on the delay of mailing systems; Morse made long distance communication instant (Winston 1998). But the telegraph technology laid in relative dormancy for nearly eighty years, not becoming universal until after its extensive use in World War One as a means for sending coded messages. World War One proved to be the catalyst for the radio in the same way as well. The next major change in person-to-person communication came after World War Two with the



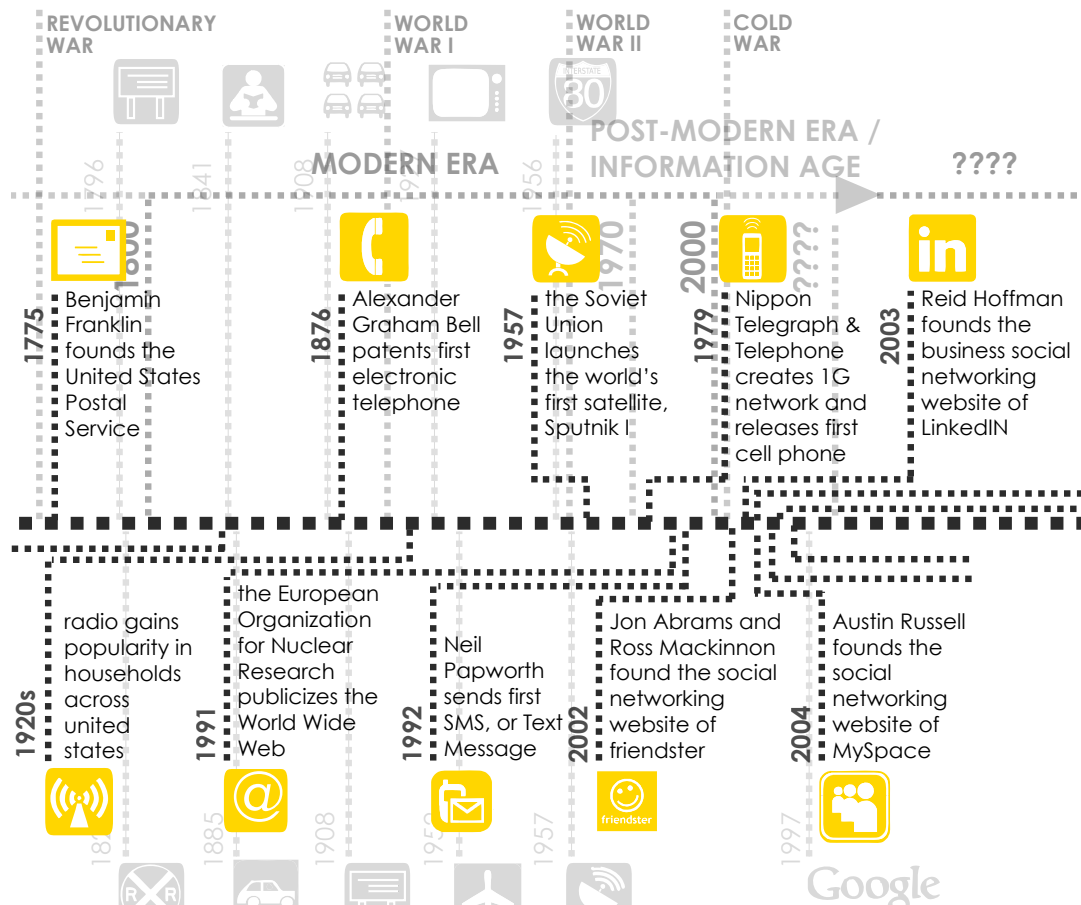
figure 5.1 the chronology of social media and telecommunications technology relative to mass media technology (continued on next four pages)

widespread public acquisition of the telephone. Although Alexander Graham Bell patented the telephone prototype nearly seventy years prior (a patent for which he fought over six hundred legal battles to claim), it's extensive use in the war incited its common public use in the years following (Winston 1998). The telephone was an early precursor to out-stepping the social bounds of the built environment as Robert Putnam writes: *"Many observers have theorized that the telephone fostered 'psychological neighborhoods,' liberating our intimate social*

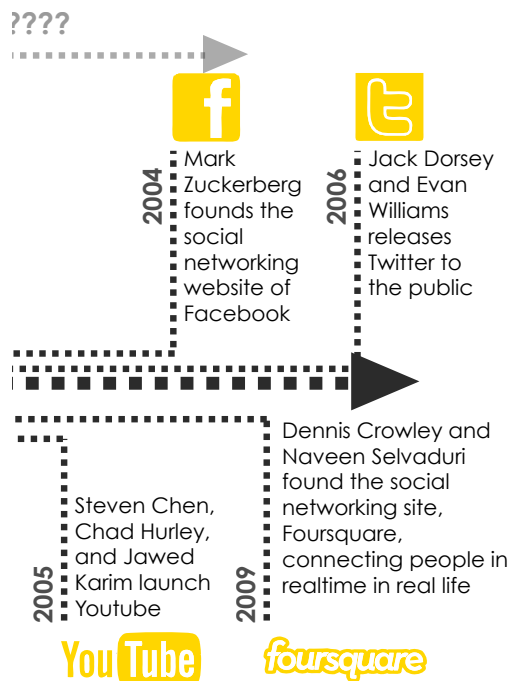


networks from the constraints of physical space” (Putnam 2001). A study in 1975 showed that two-thirds of people felt isolated when their telephone was disconnected or inoperable, but only one-third reported visiting other people in person more frequently when disconnection occurs (Putnam 2001).

Jumping to the next major conflict for the United States, The Cold War,



provides the next radical changes in telecommunications. In 1957, not long after the public diffusion of the telephone, Russia launches Sputnik - the first satellite into space, paving the way for communications satellites. The ability to send radio signals to and from satellites developed during World War Two with the successful transmission of radio waves bounced from Earth to the moon and back. By the 1990s, satellite communication had re-invented the telephone, reducing it to portable cellular devices. The telephone had revolutionized communication, but was limited to fixed-point interactions - home to



home, home to office, etc. With the cell phone, telecommunication was wireless and with the growing number of transmission towers and satellites, geographically limitless (Winston 1998).

Concurrently, another invention, the computer, which was first prototyped at the University of Iowa as the Atanasoff-Berry Computer (ABC) in 1937, did not emerge as a relevant device until after its exclusive use by the military for information storage and calculations during the Cold War. The computer went publicly available in 1981 when IBM released the first PC (personal computer). The computer would not culminate into a revolutionary social device until the nuclear scare of the Cold War precipitated perhaps the most revolutionary invention regarding public communication. With fear of mass destruction, espionage, and theft came both the need to back up research and information, but also share and collaborate regardless of geographical proximity to keep pace. To accommodate this need, the National Science Foundation subsidized computer networks known as ARPANET and CSNET, which would merge into the invention of the *World Wide Web* by the European Organization for Nuclear Research in 1991 (Doyle 2010).

The Internet was born, and within five years of its inception, fifty million people were connected to it. Social media was growing at a much faster pace than mass media had grown, as it took television thirteen years to reach fifty million people. Social interaction was reinvented through e-mail, instant message chat, and chat rooms. Unlike its predecessors of the telephone and telegraph which confined social interaction to two individuals, the Internet was socially limitless in this regard, allowing for public or private interactions at any scale regardless of physical

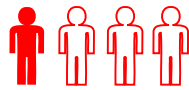


x 2,000,000,000

2 billion people
worldwide are connected to the
Internet and this number is growing
rapidly



228 million
mobile phone users in the United States,
a third of which are smart phones



over **1 in 4** of all people
are connected to the Internet



92% of American
households have Internet access



210 billion
emails sent every day



66 hours spent
on the Internet each month by the
average American

figure 5.2 Statistics on internet usage and accessibility (Jay 2001).

proximity. Online community groups soon formed in various sizes for specialized interest groups regarding any topic. If you were interested in cars you could connect with people around the world to discuss cars, if you were interested in food you could connect with an online community sharing recipes, and so on. The Internet was maturing into a modern digital representation of the original social media - public oration, discussion and forum. Within two decades of the widespread diffusion of the Internet it had become universally adopted. Before long, the Internet necessitated every communication technology from computers to cell phones to even televisions to adapt to it - they became *smart*. For these other technologies, adopting a social component became necessary to remain relevant.

The advancement of these social technologies has established social media as a contemporary household term for long distance communication. Today there are approximately two billion people around the world connected to the Internet, which is more than one in every four persons. If the current escalation of Internet access were to continue, every person in the world would be connected by 2017. ninety-two percent of Americans have internet access in their homes, and are spending sixty six hours per month on the Internet (The Nielson Company 2011). This is still well shy of the one hundred and fifty three hours spent in front of the television per month (Jay 2011). However, the television is becoming increasingly a secondary media activity, where as the Internet is growing as a primary activity, meaning the Internet is given more priority of attention over the television should the average individual be engaged with both. Also, the amount of time the television has been accessible has allowed it to fully permeate into all existing generations, while the Internet has primarily permeated

younger generations (Roberts 2005). The Internet has given rise to that which the term *social media* commonly applies today - social networking websites.

5.1.2 The Current State of Social Media: The Social Integration Paradigm

The Internet is not about technology, it is not about information, it is about communication - people talking with each other, people exchanging email...The Internet is mass participation in fully bidirectional, uncensored mass communication. Communication is the basis, the foundation, the radical ground and root upon which all community stands, grows and thrives. The Internet is a community of chronic communicators (Putnam 2001). The Internet gave rise to the formation of communities local and global as a shared space for shared interests. The term coined to describe these spaces is *social media*. As the name suggests, the term social media is applied to media designed for social interaction through highly accessible means of communicative technology. The term has grown to include Internet forums, social networking websites, social gaming such as World of Warcraft or Second Life, blogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures, video, etc. where people are able to interact with one another (Kaplan 2010, Albers 2008). To better understand the influence of social media on society, this thesis cites three examples of the growing popularity of social media in the social networking websites of Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube. Keeping in mind the statistics on mass media consumption and the amount of time its primary technologies such as television, newspaper and radio, had to permeate American culture, the following

are utilization statistics on social networks that formed only in the last half decade.

The potential effects of social media to influence collective thought and undermine the negative social consequences of the social isolation paradigm are evident in the widespread use of social networking websites. The largest social networking website is Facebook, which, as of late 2010, had over five hundred million active users worldwide forming its digital community. This number represents a growth of fifty thousand percent in active users since the social networking site launched in 2004 - seven years ago. Today, the average Facebook user is on the social networking site for more than fifty-five minutes a day, accessing the site from a variety of different social media technologies (Facebook factsheet 2010). If the average person uses the internet sixty six hours a month, then almost half of that time is spent socializing on Facebook (Jay 2011). In fact, one hundred and fifty million users are accessing the online community right now through mobile devices (Jay 2011).

Comparable growth occurred for the second largest social networking site known as Twitter. In just over five years, Twitter has acquired over one hundred and seventy five million users as of late 2010, and this number is growing by about three hundred thousand users every day. Twitter is structured for easy interface with smart phones, limiting users to text messages of one hundred and forty characters, which are being sent at the rate of nearly seven hundred per second, fifty five million a day (Bianchi 2010).

Lastly, there is Youtube, a social website for uploading personal video

 X 500,000,000 **500 million**
active users on Facebook

 **55** minutes spent on face-
book daily by the average user

 **1 in 2** users logon on to
Facebook every day

 **130** friends for the
average facebook user

 X 175,000,000 **175 million**
active users on Twitter

 X 20 **20 hours** of video
uploaded to Youtube every minute

 **2 months**
in more content has been uploaded to
Youtube than combined content aired
on television stations of ABC, NBC, and
CBS since 1948

figure 5.3 Statistics on social network usage since their origination no more than six years ago (Jay 2011).

content open for public viewing - the slogan of the site is *Broadcast Yourself*. Currently there are over two billion videos viewed on Youtube every day. Twenty hours of video are being uploaded to the site every minute - every week the equivalent of sixty thousand full-length films is uploaded. The videos are often social. They communicate with one another as responses, remakes, remixes, and so on, and incite conversation as each video has a public message board. Compared to television broadcasting, more viewable content was uploaded to Youtube in the last two months than if the television networks of ABC, NBC, and CBS had all been airing new content every hour of every day since 1948. There is literally more video on Youtube than can be watched in a lifetime. Multiple lifetimes. Today, the most popular videos on Youtube are approaching four hundred million views, and the website is less than six years old, showing signs only of increasing popularity and unlimited growth (Jay 2011).

As only three examples of social media, the exponential growth of Facebook, Twitter and Youtube in less than a decade demonstrates the role social media will have in shaping future paradigms, and there are several reasons for their booming popularity. Given the homogeneity, monotony, and automation of the built environment, urban and suburban, the Internet and social media have created an outlet for creative expression and a means for self-employed education. Youtube celebrates creativity, and its users are rewarded with what Douglas Rushkoff calls *social value* - a non-monetary, motivational benefit from creating social interaction, social reaction, or social benefits through their social media creations, such as a youtube video. But a Youtube video is only a minor example of greater value being created and shared for social value such as the Linux operating system, Craigslist and

Wikipedia. Apart from creating social value, The interactive component of social media itself undermines the underlying isolation principles of mass media technology. Particularly through sites such as Yelp.com and Google Reviews, the purpose of which is to foster public critique about products and services (Rushkoff OfCom 2009). The Internet and social media are enabling conversations among human beings that were simply not possible in the era of mass media (The Cluetrain Manifesto 2010). The other reason for the emerging popularity of social media is simply that it is enjoyable to interaction and connect with other people, as noted by Rushkoff: *"The best reason to begin reconnecting with real people, places, and value is that it feels good. Happiness doesn't come from the top down ,but from the bottom up. The moment we think of ourselves as part of a movement, instead of real people, will be the meant we are much more susceptible to being disheartened or sidetracked by the business page, the terror alert, and the never-ending call to self interest"* (Rushkoff 2009). One may even say the dissociating condition of the American built environment and saturation of mass media in American culture necessitated social interaction in the digital realm.

As social media continues to permeate, what will be the implications for mass media technology, collective thought, and eventually the built environment? In its infancy, the social integration paradigm of social media is already establishing patterns of social interaction that undermine the underlying principles of mass media. However, In spite of the positive social contributions of social media, the quality and incentive of the interaction it produces has garnered social media its share of criticism.

5.2.0 Critiquing the Digital Social: Misunderstandings and Misplaced Blame

Social media does not escape criticism. This is particularly true for social networking sites that represent social media as a household term such as the aforementioned Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. The critical reaction to these social websites was swift and brutal. It had to be. Only half a decade has passed since the creation of these online social spaces. Common negative assessments of social media culminate in generalizations regarding their employment of ego-centrism, destructive interaction, fraudulence, loss of privacy, social ineptitude, de-emphasis of face-to-face interaction, and so on. There is no denying the existence of these consequences - obsessing over Facebook profiles, destructive interaction as opinions and people clash on news article message boards, online avatars reducing the human being to a digital abstraction - But are these truly *negative* social or cultural repercussions? At a glance it may seem so, but is it reasonable to attribute these consequences as socially damaging? Even if so, is it reasonable to pin them on a technology that is, at most, seven years young? In consideration of these questions, it is more appropriate to regard such criticism to be misplaced assessments of social media that were too quickly conceived as part of a popular reluctance toward this evolving technology. Rather, the presumed negative attributes of social media are more befitting of lingering social memes of mass media, fragments left behind as society transitions away from paradigms of mass media institutions to the collective social-centric thought social media produces.

In his book *The Digital Pandemic: Re-establishing Face-to-Face Contact in the Electronic Age*, published in 2010, author Mack R. Hicks provides an analytical critique of social media exemplary of the misplaced criticism social media has received following its inception

to today. In fact, Hicks makes the mistake of combining social media and mass media in the first chapter, assessing and critiquing their technologies as an indistinguishable whole throughout the book. *"The encroachment of mechanization is destroying the human spirit...Are we moving from active, sensitive and creative to passive, mechanical and conventional?"* Hicks continues: *"Where are these influences evident? Smart phones, televisions, computers, electronic games, Youtube, Myspace, Facebook, objective testing, airport body scans and categorical thinking that reduces us to mere abstractions. What about billboards at malls that spy on people and change the product signage to fit the shopper's profile?...Are we unique and unpredictable humans or are we mere abstract concepts, like middle class, bipolar or urbanite?"* (Hicks 2010). This excerpt from his book is representative of the collective misplacement of social media criticism. Homogeneity, monotony, automation, mechanization - Hicks attributes to seven-year-old social media technology the quintessential anti-social cultural structures that mass-minded processes had established over the last half millennium. Hicks goes on to quote an article from *The Wall Street Journal* to discuss social ineptitude in the modern youth: *"Young people across the country are posing like statues in public squares, dropping their pants in train stations and bursting into song in malls...15 pairs of identical twins, dressed in identical outfits, filed a New York City subway car and mirrored each other's actions without explanation...is it political protest and rebellion against authority, or is just people who want to feel something again?...Are tattoos and flesh jewelry a way of saying - Hey look at me, I'm important, I'm a human being, not just a mechanical part?"* (Hicks 2010). Again, the apparent need for attention, individuality, the search for glimpse of spontaneity and *the real* are the reactionary consequences of youth

raised in a homogenized and automated culture and built environment as prescribed by the social isolation paradigm. While as a positive, considering the age of the individuals cited, it is likely that these social interactions were organized through social media.

Even with his positive hypotheses about the future with social media, crossover of the social isolation paradigm into social media is evident in Robert Putnam's conjectures of the social consequences of digital communities. Putnam provides an example of such crossover when he predicts heightened homogeneity in digital communities: "*In physical communities we are forced to live with people who may differ from us in many ways. But virtual communities offer us the opportunity to construct utopian collectivities - communities of interest, education, tastes, beliefs, and skills. In cyberspace we can remake the world out of an unsettled landscape*" (Putnam 2001). But as already discussed, communal homogeneity long predates the Internet as a consequence of mass media. Although such uniformity is evident in social media with discussion boards, blogs, and Facebook groups that unite people of common backgrounds and interests, the true reality is that social media is disrupting cultural homogeneity as people become more transparent about their convictions on social networking sites and the anonymity of the Internet advocates voicing those convictions. The decomposition of communal uniformity and the engagement of diverse social groups is apparent in the social discordance of essentially any online discussion board. A brief look at the public commentary, the incendiary social exchange of divergent factions regarding any online news article, youtube video or Facebook post concerning a sensitive issue reveals a collective shift away from cultural homogeneity.

What the commentary from Hicks and Putnam represent is a premature reaction to social media without regard to its historical context in the greater time line of periodization. The so-called negative attributes of social media are actually *good* - they are the representation of clashing media institutions in the early stages of a collective paradigm shift. Social media is not causing ego-centrism, destructive interaction, fraudulence, loss of privacy, or social ineptitude, it is simply *revealing* these negative characteristics as symptoms of the social isolation paradigm. The transparency is *good* - it undermines the hypersensitive, Victorian era-esque need for personal privacy and introversion, destructive interaction is *good*, it marks the beginning of interaction between social groups who were otherwise incommunicado. In this way, social media undermines the underlying structures of mass media. People blasting one another on online message boards, rallying for governmental change around the world, at each others throats over politics, or bursting into song in the middle of public spaces are all emblematic of social media unraveling the tightly coiled grip mass media has maintained on culture since its origination in the Renaissance half a millennium ago.

As part of this transition, social media has not remained immune to the permeating influence of mass media, particularly to corporate advertising. Facebook profiles become structured more and more determinately to compel individuals to choose their *likes* and *favorites* so that advertising can be made more specific to the person's potential wants. Google Mail picks up on keywords and phrases and recurrent themes in the emails of a user's inbox, tailoring advertisements to the assumed interests of the individual. Search engines employ advertisements that correspond to a search query.

Popular Youtube videos attract advertisements that correlate to the content of the video to more accurately speak to a target audience. But as Rushkoff indicates, there is a redundancy and a temporality to such an advertising campaign. If a person is on the Internet, He or she is already consuming - a computer, a connection, a provider - the advertisement effectively tells people to stop consuming to look at a consumer product (Rushkoff OfCom 2009). It's a finite model waiting to be made obsolete by the first social value seeker who creates the *Wikipedia-esque*, the *Linux-esque*, the *Craigslist-esque* version of Facebook, Google Mail, Youtube, and others.

However, there remains one consequence of social media that warrants further discussion for its potentially negative impact on culture and the built environment - the reduction of face-to-face interaction and physical community as substituted by digital communication. This repercussion of social media has greater implications for the necessity of architecture when the infrastructure for social interaction could potentially be reduced to social media technologies, marginalizing a need for social spaces in the built environment. Edwin Gardner comments on this possibility in his article from *Metropolis Magazine* entitled *No Need for Architecture, We have Facebook Now*: "*Social spaces abandons the actual, built environment in favor of an imagined, virtual one. There is no need for physical architecture anymore to enable social practice...We've got Facebook now. In a sense the rise of social networks is the remedy for the alienation and anonymity that inherently comes with metropolitan life*" (Gardner 2009). If architecture were to abandon mass media technology for a synchronization to social media technology, would it secure its own fate as a redundant component of human interaction? An inherent human need for social

presence and the greater implications of the social integration in the future suggest not, as discussed in the following section of this thesis.

5.3.0 The Necessity of Social Presence

Social media criticism regarding the de-emphasis placed on face-to-face interaction merits further investigation for its potential implications on social spaces in architecture - mainly, what purpose would these spaces serve if the physical environment were no longer necessary for society to interact? This question prompts a necessary investigation of the issue concerning the digital world as a replacement for the physical world on the basis that the digital is more in tune with fostering social interaction as it must consider little other than connecting individuals, while the built environment must invest in other functions and is far less adaptable to cultural change. The *virtual* provides expedited, efficient communication regardless of place and time, and is resilient and adaptable to cultural changes of place and time. The digital environment is consistent in its relevancy to the social component of culture, while the built environment has long-since synced to mass media paradigms. Prior to the social isolation era, the infrastructure for maintaining community was once an architecture, the place of gathering: The town well, the town square, the local market, or the family room of a house. It was about a designed public space for the purpose of human interaction. In the emerging era of the social integration paradigm, Social media is establishing itself as the cohesive infrastructure for returning to communal gathering. But with regards to some social interaction, the non-space of the Internet may be replacing these public infrastructure of designed space with infrastructures of network-connected devices such as cell phones and computers. But has this exchange of infrastructure, of tangible space for intangible space, de-emphasized the need for tactile interaction and the need for architecture to enable face-to-face communication?

The objective of this section is to shape a rational defense for the

necessity of architecture based on the hypothesis that people have an inherent need for face-to-face interaction that social media and place-less interaction cannot substitute. As with the discussion in the preceding section, the proclaimed substitution of physical for digital social contexts is equally considered a misplaced assessment of social media that was too quickly conceived as part of a popular reluctance toward this growing technology.

However, the question of an imminent replacement of social spaces in the built environment with social spaces in the digital environment remains a very relevant question for discussing the potential impact of social media on collective thought and the built environment. How would the social integration paradigm include or exclude the built environment? Or more appropriately, what are the inalienable characteristics of human socialization which the virtual world must forfeit but face-to-face interaction fostered by the built environment can provide? These questions additionally warrant an investigation of the role of face-to-face interaction as an inherent need for personal and collective well-being - a consideration that has been contemplated by major western intellectuals for several millennia (Nehamas 1989).

Despite its semiotic understanding, the phrase *face-to-face interaction* has become a misnomer for describing physical human interaction. Social media technologies allow face-to-face interaction through video communication, but not in the understood, implicit definition of the phrase that assumed physical proximity. Instead this thesis uses the term *social presence* for the purpose of distinguishing between human interaction that takes place regardless of physical proximity and corporeal face-to-face human interaction that takes place in the built

environment. As defined in the front matter of this thesis, the notion of social presence, where presence is defined as an object's or situation's tangibility, tactility, existence, proximity, physical intelligibility, suggests that no matter how engrossed in social media society becomes, we will always have a need for physical face-to-face human interaction, which can be fostered through spaces designed for the purpose of interacting.

Tracing back through history and the periodization of philosophy, study of an inherent human need for social presence is a recurrent topic described through the contributions of prominent western intellectuals and in the narratives of cultural tradition. Specifically regarding explanations of love and intimacy, but also in how the quality of our existence is dependent on social presence as a primal human need. As early as the theological foundations of Christianity man is described as a relational being needing companionship in Eden. Only with another human, a woman, are the two socially content. The same is true in the relational narratives from the foundations of western culture in ancient Greece. In his book, *Symposium*, Plato writes for the speaker Aristophanes, where he also contends that people are relational beings by nature. Aristophanes recounts a story where people were once single beings that were cut into two pieces, man and woman, by a lightning bolt from Zeus. Incomplete and desiring wholeness, men and women are fated to search for their other half for eternity (Nehamas 1989). More recently, relative to the mass media era of the social isolation paradigm, were philosophical explorations of solipsism and individualism that concluded in discussions of human sociability. For example, the nineteenth century philosopher Georg Hegel, who was an accomplished theorist on the topics of metaphysics, phenomenology

and ontology, claimed that people define their very existence through social presence. In his well-published master/slave dialectic, Hegel proposes that the individual is innately solipsistic until he or she interacts with another being, losing his or her parochial universality and inheriting physical human contact as a fundamental necessity. The human interaction redefines an individual's sense of existence to be intersubjective, necessitating the individual to perpetually engage in social interaction to maintain this redefined sense of existence and

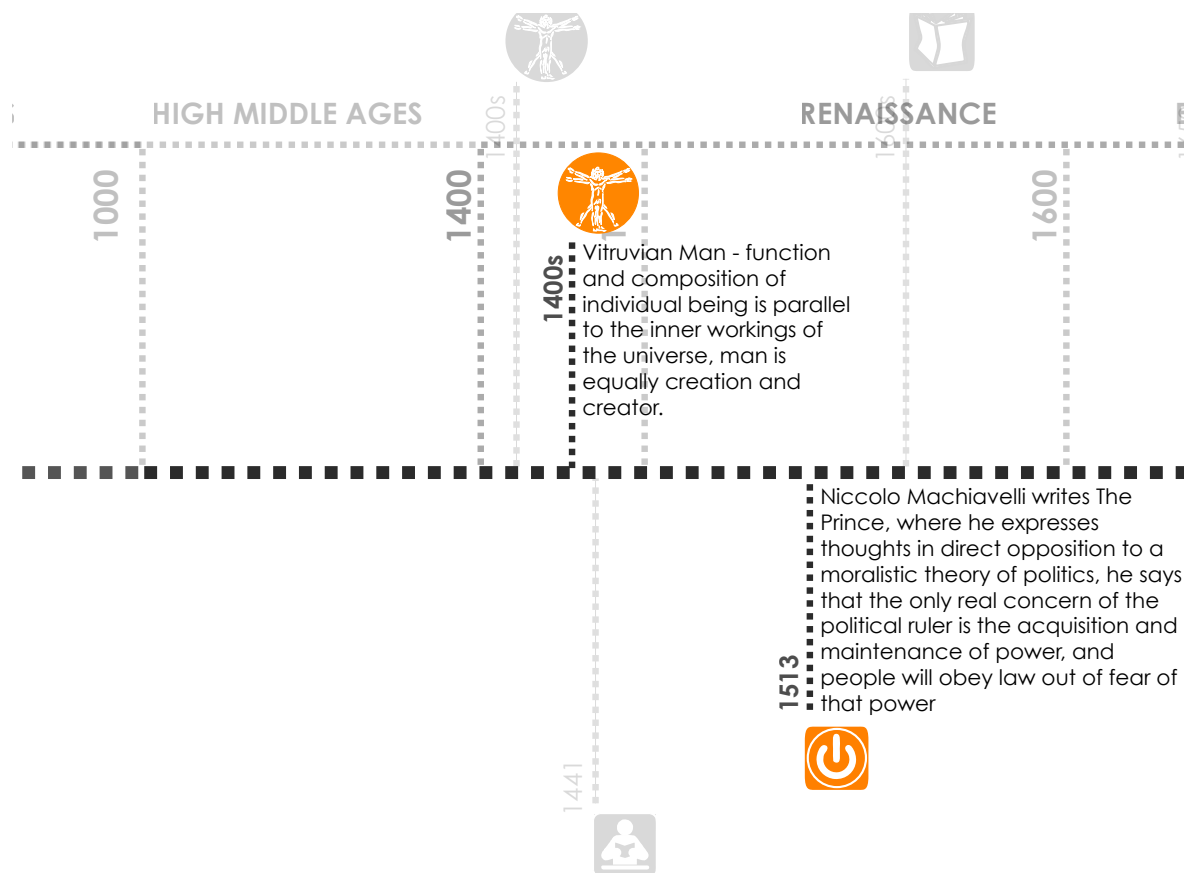
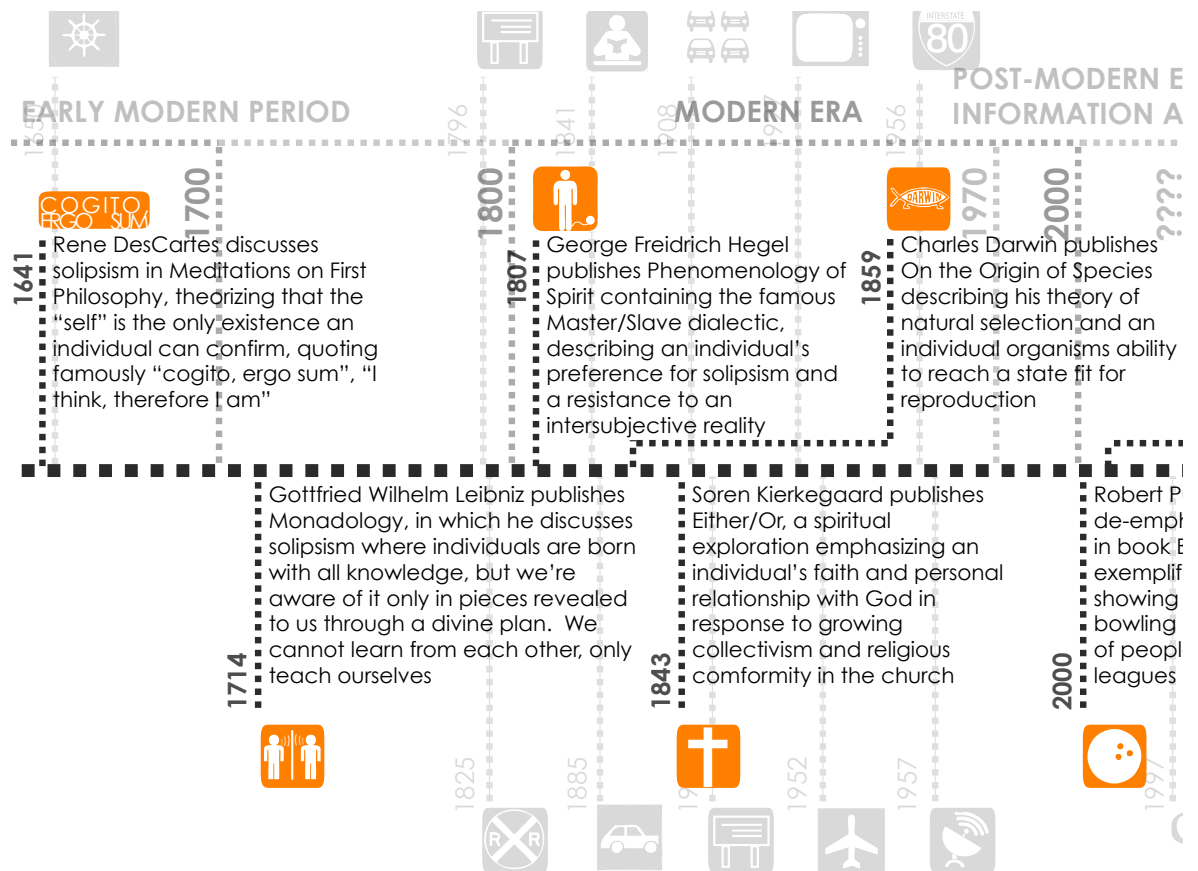


figure 5.4 the chronology of philosophy and collective thought relative to mass media development from the Renaissance to today. (continued on next two page, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2010)

his or her sense of well-being (Williams 1992).

In the context of the emerging era of the social integration paradigm, cultural theorists such as Robert Putnam react to the social isolation paradigm and begin to question at what point in history did society ever truly interact in social presence. In *chapter three* of this thesis, Putnam describes the declining social condition of the late twentieth century, in which the number of individuals partaking in a specific



turn out to complement, not replace, face-to-face communities” (Putnam 2001). Lewis Mumford echoes this sentiment about technology-aided human interaction when he writes: *“For the wider the scattering of the population and the greater the isolation of the individual household, the more effort it takes to do privately, even with the aid of many machines and automatic devices, what used to be done in company often with conversation, song, and the enjoyment of the physical presence of others”* (Mumford 1961). In his book *Outliers*, author Malcolm Gladwell cites research on the necessity of social presence as it relates to our physical well-being, reducing stress and heart disease. Gladwell writes about the small town of Roseto, Italy where the study took place: *“[the researchers] looked at how the Rosetans visited one another, stopping to chat on the street, say, or cooking for one another in their backyards. They learned about the extended family clans that underlay the town’s social structure...They counted twenty-two separate civic organizations in a town of just under two thousand people. They picked up on the particular egalitarian ethos of the community, which discouraged the wealthy from flaunting their success and helped the unsuccessful obscure their failures...They Rosetans were healthy because of where they were from, because of the world they had created for themselves in their tiny little town in the hills.”* Gladwell continues: *“No one was used to thinking about health in terms of community”* (Gladwell 2008).

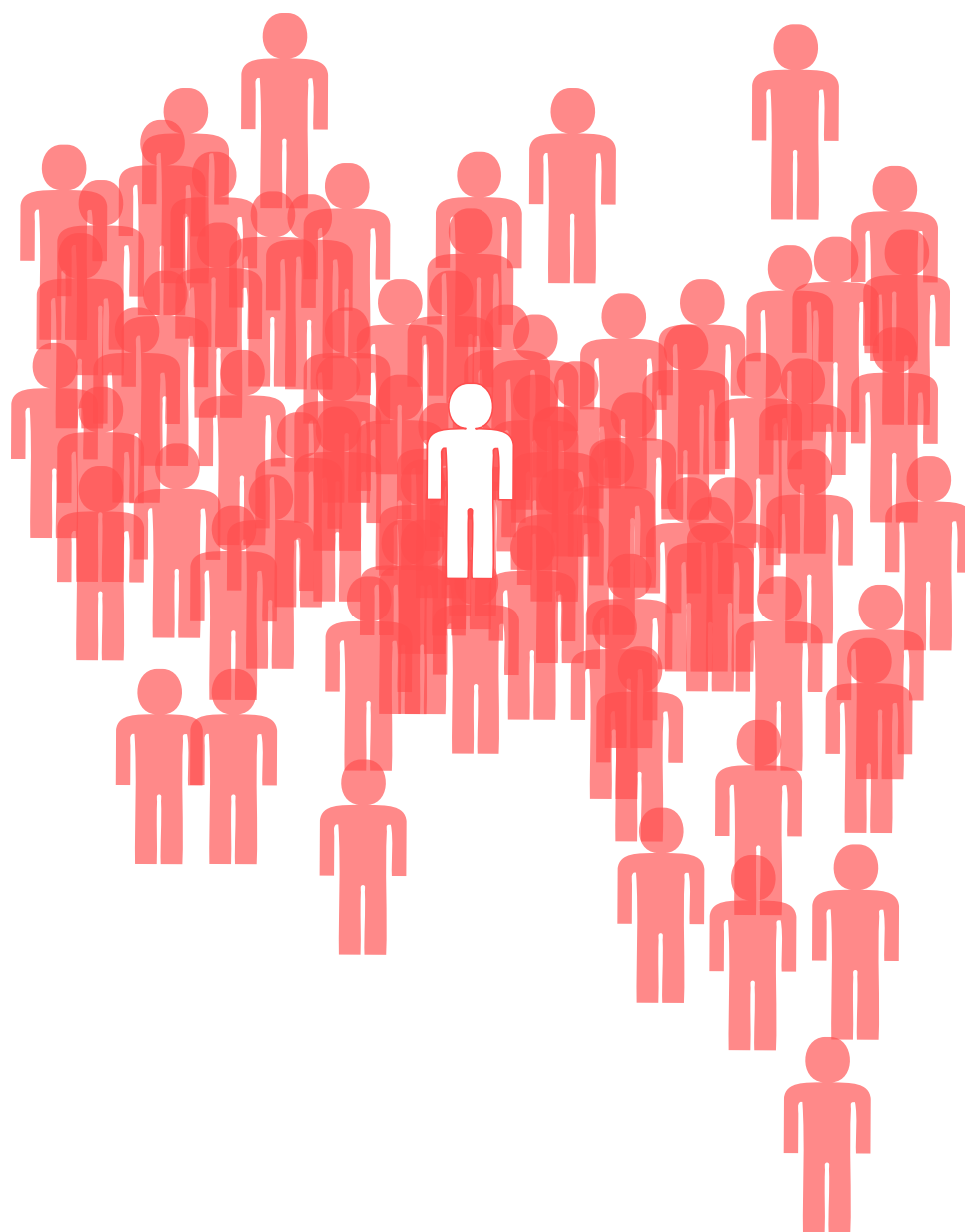
The over-arching conclusions developing out of the history of physical human interaction studies, and what we as individuals can discern of our own need to be in the physical presence of other people, is that above all else, community and relationships stem from some universal, primal need for tactile human interaction. Social presence

allows us phenomenological information and relativisms about other people beyond what social media and technology can explicate, such as experiencing human interaction beyond the senses of sight and hearing to include touch, taste and smell, or the opportunity to perceive another being's physical presence and idiosyncrasies relative to our own attributes such as with a formal job interview or the necessity of social presence for individuals who met on an online dating website. It is the difference between understanding a person as a signifier relative to technology's presentation of a person as a signified - the difference between seeing someone in a picture on Facebook and meeting them in person for the first time. This is not to suggest that technology and social media are negligible in terms of their ability to give people a sense of community and being. Rather, the necessity of social presence suggests that if social media is used, as Putnam suggests, it must be in addition to social presence, not an alternative to social presence - WebMD is a great reference, but does not replace going to the hospital; Google books is a great resource, but does not replace going to the library, and Facebook is a great medium for communication, but does not replace getting together. Perhaps this point can be illustrated by thinking of our own interactions through social media. Who are we digitally engaged with and why? Not, who are we friends with online, but with whom do we genuinely maintain a relationship? The likely answer to this question is that these people were a long-standing part of our lives at one time, and/or they are people with whom we intend to have physical social interaction in the future. We connect via social media, just as society connected via the letter or telephone, with the conscious intent or subconscious understanding that these are people we will one day see again (Bartz 2010).

The ability for present-day relationships in community to truly thrive and become complete communities will be dependent on their ability to synthesize interaction in reality with interaction in virtual reality, which allows social media to be a foundation for returning to face-to-face interaction. As this thesis is written, the validity of this concept has been exemplified in perhaps the most explicit example of the benefits of social media to date in the ongoing governmental revolution of Egypt, where social media is being used as a tool to organize social interaction in the built environment in the form of protests across the city of Cairo. The protests in Cairo showcase the pinnacle of social media as a social organizer and complementary to social interaction in physical space. Microcosms of this social phenomena are developing as well. More common examples of an integration of the digital and physical is emphasized by emerging social media such as *Foursquare* and *Google latitude*, which allow users to publicly announce their physical location through social networks, increasing chance social encounters and facilitating group social activity in the built environment (Foursquare factsheet 2010). Supplementing social presence, social media arrives today where it first began, in built social spaces of the city plaza and the town square.

Albeit a slow affair, the movement back to social presence must be understood as a time-laden process that will require some coaxing. After all, it took over half a millennium for the social isolation paradigm to peak in the twentieth century, and likewise will require ample time for its denouement. However, social media and the social integration paradigm will ease and expedite this transition as it becomes the social component of the new and growing deep-seated process of

sustainability. But just as architecture synced to the deep-seated process of mass media technology, what is the architecture that will emerge as a result of a social integration paradigm? What role will architecture play in grounding the social integration paradigm in the physical? How will the built environment adapt from its anti-social condition, be retrofitted for sociability, and what new building typologies will emerge as anti-social typologies become obsolete? As Edwin Gardner writes: *"Whether we must deal with avatar anxiety or a digital renaissance of self-reflection, social media is changing how we relate to ourselves and to space. Tomorrow the 'invisible dimension floating over everyday life' that is social media will descend and touch down; it will become omnipresent in the everyday. When the internet becomes truly mobile and computing ubiquitous, when the virtual mixes with the real, and when the interface merges with the face-to-face then we will be in a new place all together"* (Gardner 2009). The *invisible dimension* of social media has long since touched down, as the real world and the virtual world are already something of a false dichotomy.



CHAPTER SIX

THEORIZING ARCHITECTURAL FRAMEWORKS
OF SOCIAL MEDIA PARADIGMS:
THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE SOCIAL



Chapter Six: Theorizing Architectural Frameworks of Social Media Paradigms

With an analysis of the gradual process of an architectural embodiment of mass media paradigms as a backdrop, the goal of *chapter six* is to interpret social media as a creator of a paradigm that will result in a new framework for developing the built environment. The chapter begins with a discussion of the building typologies that are already emerging as a result of social media technology, and concludes by theorizing the impact of these typologies when they become publicly accessible and entirely synchronized with social media technology. Furthermore, this chapter concludes by citing examples of the social integration paradigm uprooting the embedded social structures of mass media as a retrofitting of the existing, lagging built environment.

6.1.0 The Architecture of the Social

The current and future benefits of a society permanently connected through social media far outweigh the waning negative characteristics of lingering social memes of mass media influence. In spite of the unfavorable productions of social media such as ruthless or hackneyed discussion of online articles and Youtube videos, what these conversations represent is a pure form of democracy - a freedom to express and communicate beyond the institutionalized boundaries that once limited such interaction. The freedom of speech on social media, although in its most unfiltered state, is still self-regulatory and is allowing a connection between social groups who otherwise may not have had the opportunity to engage. The ongoing anti-government revolts of Egypt and Libya explicitly represent social media at the apex of its collective value as a means for establishing social unity and a medium for publicly voicing a rallying call. Twitter, Facebook and blogs are being used to disseminate information about protests, foster morale with success stories, and globally renounce intolerable actions. *“When people needed to communicate to organize demonstrations that ultimately led to fall of the regime, they went to Facebook as a primary news source. Facebook served as a place for people to tell each other where they would be, whether that was fleeing from the anarchy or rushing into it, or keeping track of changes from thousands of miles away”* writes journalist Dan Rowinski (Rowinski 2011). In an abstract sense, radical cultural change is only a tweet, a Facebook update, or a text message away. The defending governments of Egypt and Libya fully understood social media as a catalyst for collective action, which is why they sought to immediately shut down the Internet, first and foremost, Twitter, in their countries in an effort to quell the rebellion (Rowinski 2011).

As exemplified by the upheaval in the Middle East, social media is being used as a supplement to interaction - it is a community organizational tool and a catalyst of social presence. It is the modern version of the ancient orator - the means for acquiring all information. News is no longer sought, it is shared. This is how the term *going viral* came to be as a term to describe the instantaneous spread of information because of its widespread accessibility when shared. The tipping point for mass-dissemination has been expedited by an increasingly more social world. Just as the popularity of the Internet demanded connection from more and more individuals, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube are in themselves becoming a *new Internet* demanding comparable connection as a new mandatory component of *being social* or *being connected*.

This point, if drawn out in terms of a greater time line and with or without a necessity for social presence, can be quite daunting to imagine as a potential veil over physical human interaction just as mass media had created. Imagine if the social integration paradigm remained stuck in the digital, creating a society of well-connected but isolated individuals (Cacioppo 2009). The long standing process of paradigm permeation in periodization suggests that social integration will percolate into the built environment as social presence, but part of that transition could entail a period of a primarily digitally-connected society, particularly during the transition of the built space away from lagging anti-social frameworks to those of social integration. This thought gives rise to an image of families texting and chatting one another from separate rooms of McMansion homes before the integration paradigm permeates into domestic space, an urban dweller Facebooking his or her neighbor because the open street space of the city is unsuitable

for communicating in person. To this point it becomes necessary for architecture to embrace this paradigm without delay to truncate the impending stage of a digitally-dependent community. It becomes all the more necessary for the built environment, urban and suburban, and public space to address and embody the current and future means by which people are socially connecting. The *architecture of the social* is a discussion of emerging building typologies that could catalyze built space toward communal integration.

6.1.1 From Non-Space to Space: A New Building Typology

The concept of unlimited growth may seem feasible in the non-space environment of the Internet. Two billion people across the world surfing the web, half a million on Facebook, nearly a quarter million on Twitter, seemingly infinite hours of video available on Youtube - if the Internet isn't limitless, it certainly gives the impression of having no bounds. but in reality such growth is paralleled in the physical world. These websites do not simply operate themselves, but require thousands of employees, computers, servers, backup servers, memory storage, and ultimately because of these needs, *buildings*.

This proved to be the case for two doctorate students at Stanford University by the names of Sergey Brin and Larry Page who, In 1998, founded the Internet search engine giant known as Google. Six years after its founding, what had started as an experimental research project for Brin and Page was now generating three billion dollars of revenue and had expanded to over three thousand employees. Just

thirteen years later to today, Google is employing approximately twenty thousand people in a company that has an estimated net worth of over forty billion dollars (Google Factsheet 2010). Today the company is best known for its search engine component, Google Mail or Gmail, Google Latitude, Google Earth, Youtube, and many other functions.

How does a company that provides limitless services, has grown from two people to twenty thousand people in twelve years, and generates billions of dollars in revenue, stay connected? The short answer is social presence, the long answer came in 2006, when Google purchased nearly one million square feet of land in Mountain View, California, constructing a campus of offices for the company that is now referred to as the *Googleplex* (Mills 2006). The Googleplex became the first manifestation of the non-space of the Internet in to the physical space of the built environment. It was a building translated from the digital space



figure 6.1 Aerial image of the Googleplex - the first building to be translated from an online social space marking the dawn of a new building typology (Google.com 2010).

of a website to the physical space of an architecture, and as such, it marked the arrival of a new building typology. As Google continues to grow today its expansion in the digital realm is mirrored in the physical. Google currently has headquarters and offices in over forty countries around the world (Google Factsheet 2010). Other social websites such as Facebook and Twitter would follow a similar trend to Google, constructing buildings at a pace to match the website's growth on the Internet. To allow growth for its digital existence, Facebook, along with its one hundred and fifty thousand square foot headquarters in Palo Alto, California, has already constructed at least two separate data centers while leasing space in a third in three different locations across the United States, and the buildings are equally enormous (Facebook Factsheet 2010). A data center for Facebook recently constructed in Rutherford County, North Carolina, has a footprint of over three hundred thousand square feet sitting on one hundred and

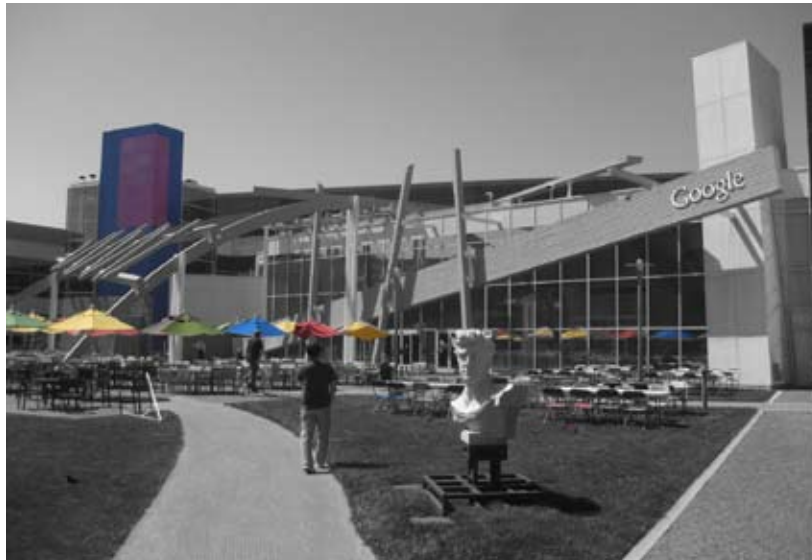


figure 6.2 image of the Googleplex's private interior courtyard emblematic of Google's playful aesthetic, but not its public accessibility (Longenbach 2010)



figure 6.3 The architecture of the Googleplex is branded with recognizable symbols of Google Earth (Longenbach 2010)

fifty acres of property. Another data center is in Prineville, Oregon, at nearly one hundred and fifty thousand square feet (See *figure 6.5* for aerial images of the data centers), while the third is a much smaller leased space in Virginia (Facebook Data Center 2011).

In July of 2010 I had the opportunity to travel to Palo Alto, California, to visit both the Googleplex and the Facebook Headquarters. What I found of both headquarters was an explicit contradiction between the privacy of the architecture and physical spaces they occupy and accessibility of the digital spaces they provide. Both headquarters are physically isolated - Facebook's building is located on the outskirts of



figure 6.4 The architecture of the Googleplex represents Google only by aesthetic and brand, while the security-enforced privacy of the complex is not representative of the accessibility of its services (Longenbach 2010)

a residential neighborhood, and the Googleplex is protected by open land, surrounding streets, and a campus layout focused inward on an enclosed outdoor courtyard. At the Googleplex, this privacy is enforced by security guards who patrol the campus checking for identification badges worn by every employee. I came to understand this first-hand as my visit to the Googleplex was unexpectedly interrupted by a security



figure 6.5 aerial images of Facebook's two data centers. The top image is the data center in Prineville, Oregon, the lower image is the data center in Rutherford, North Carolina [Facebook Data Center 2010]

guard who kindly escorted me off the premise. What was evident in the architecture of both facilities was a translation of mostly company branding from the digital world to the physical. The headquarters did not personify or embody the characteristics of their digital counterparts, but were recognizable as them only by explicit labeling of *Facebook*



figure 6.6 Image of the street sign in front of the Facebook headquarters marking the web-based social network's physical location in Palo Alto, California (Longenbach 2010)



figure 6.7 the interior of Facebook's data center is endless rows of data servers [Facebook Data Center 2010]

and *Google* throughout the architecture. For an emerging building typology, the exterior building is rather undistinguished. The colorful umbrellas in the included courtyard of the Googleplex come the closest to echoing the lively, innovative, approachable and available qualities of Google's digital existence, which is a poor statement of the architecture's communication with its social context.

However, the interior spaces of both complexes are quite similar as well, and describe a story entirely different than the exterior communicates. An abundance of colors, textures, and shapes, variances in circulation and layout, spaces for activities of play, work, and respite - the interior of both facilities is emblematic of the many qualities that comprise a successful public space (Hardwicke 2006). The image in figure 6.9 shows a Facebook employee skateboarding down the hallway, while another employee sits with her bicycle. I recall seeing at least one



figure 6.8 Facebook leases a building in Palo Alto - like the Googleplex, this is an architecture that neglects the social function and public commodity of Facebook (Longenbach 2010)



figure 6.9 The interior social spaces of the Facebook headquarters have qualities of good public space, but the architecture is private an inaccessible to the public (Dave 2010)



figure 6.10 The interior social spaces of the Facebook headquarters (Dave 2009)

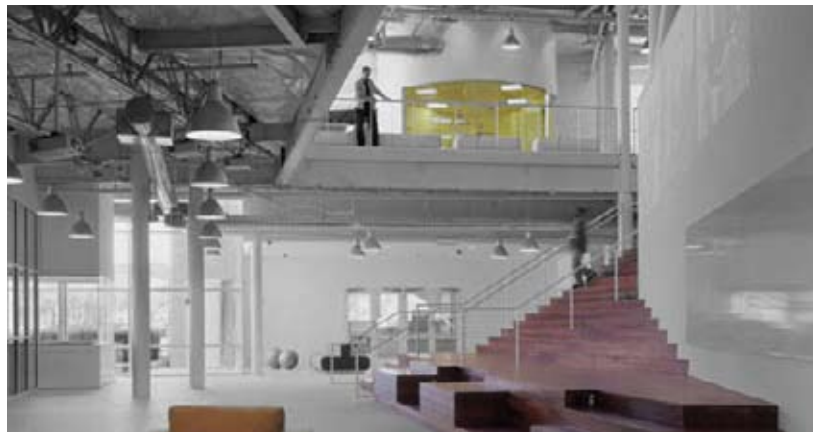


figure 6.11 The interior social spaces of the Googleplex in Mountain View, California (Wilkinson 2009)

individual go rolling past the exterior windows as I walked around a glazed facade of the Facebook headquarters. Albeit a workplace, the freedom of expression and social connection offered by the websites of these companies is most closely manifest in the interior space but deprived of public enjoyment as they are neglected in the site and exterior architecture. Like the enclosed courtyard of the Googleplex signifies, the composition and intention of the physical spaces of these Internet giants is in conflict with the purpose of the digital space which spawned them. The introverted architecture is at odds with its digital social extroversion.

The social duplicity of Facebook and Google in the two realms signals a missed opportunity for architecture. The mistranslation of the sociability of the websites' digital landscape to physical presence signifies a divide between the two worlds that simply does not exist, and any inclination of a divide between the two worlds is trending to marginalize. They are interconnected and moving toward further interconnectedness, and this is largely due in part to the efforts of these websites. While the necessity for creating this building typology currently lies in the pragmatic - the need for servers, employees, administration, spaces - the opportunity to serve a greater public and social purpose is unrivaled. Such an architecture could be the art, the cultural thrust forward, that concretizes the imminent social isolation paradigm in to the collective psyche. However, somewhere in the manifestation of *Google.com*, *Youtube.com*, *Facebook.com*, etc. into architectural embodiments, the social components of these social media websites were lost. So how can the ease and indeterminacy of social media interaction be retained and instilled in this *interface typology*? The remainder of this thesis is an exploration for a public

architecture that seamlessly harmonizes digital and physical social interaction.

6.1.2 The Interface Typology: Integrating the Interface with the Face-to-Face

In her book *On the Plaza*, author Setha Low dissects civic spaces around the world in determination of the qualities that make for a successful or unsuccessful public plaza. Diversity, sociability, social discourse, cultural history and significance, play, sense of ownership, and physical appeal are examples of just a few characteristics that she uses to define successful and well-used public spaces (Low 2000). With these characteristics in mind, perhaps the best way to visualize the false dichotomy between the physical and digital world signified by the interface typology is to imagine social media as an extension of public space, as though the confines of the urban center extend far beyond its physical boundaries. Certainly the limitations of digital interaction relative to social presence disallow it to fulfill many of the qualities of a rich public space, hence the need for social presence. Still, in many ways the interactional function of social media mirrors the qualities that make public space socially vibrant, and relatively speaking, equally deserving to be understood as a fruitful outlet for leisure time and fulfilling social needs.

Facebook, however, as a digital public space is still lacking essential qualities of ownership and diversity that rich public spaces provide. In its early days, Facebook was more attune to the gated community, a safe suburb, the *Celebration-Florida* of online social networks, allowing only those with a college email address to get in. At first, only those

with a Harvard email address. In terms of accessibility Facebook has made progress by allowing anyone to join, but in terms of ownership it remains more like a planned community of homogenous houses where users change profile pictures and *likes* as suburban dwellers change the color of their house and the wreath on their door. It is the privately owned public plaza, including the saturation of advertising, where you can do anything you want as long as its within the understood limits of the tameness of the site. Facebook still struggles to shed its founding in an upper-class disposition as the digital suburb, while sites like MySpace and Tumblr become more personalized and expressive as the diversified urban center, as *The New York Review of Books* writer Charles Peterson observes: “to call MySpace “ugly” would be roughly equivalent to categorically denouncing graffiti - to praise Facebook for its “clean” design, akin to celebrating tract housing” (Peterson 2010). The state of Facebook is adapting further to shed social presence pretenses of a *victorian-era* need for privacy. In doing so, it may be digging its own grave as an ultimately rigid and planned social site. Placing Facebook in the broader context of future social media development, it is not hard to imagine it as a *transitional* social network, deeply affected by its proximity in time to the social isolation paradigm, and waiting for a more well-designed, diverse, expressive social site to overtake it. Despite attempts to do, this has not happened yet, though it may still be too early in the social media era for such a website to take hold. Peterson describes Zuckerberg as the Robert Moses of the Internet, *bringing severe order to a chaotic milieu*, while the world waits for the *Jane Jacobs of online urban planning to appear* (Peterson 2010). (The next section will discuss a case study for an expressive, individually owned, and relatively ad-hoc social network that uses Facebook as its building block).

In anticipation of a more spirited online public space, there are still characteristics of Facebook that will be intrinsic to its predecessor. Facebook offers several socially productive features that will certainly serve as precedent to very engaging online social conditions in the future. For instance, consider the parallels between traditional public space and Facebook's *newsfeed* feature - a chronological account on the homepage of Facebook that shares the social participations of one's community. Not only are there occurrences of sociability, play and discourse, but as within a physical space, one is able to actively participate or passively "people watch." Both spaces contain the same social hierarchy of active, passive, and anonymous community participants. A Facebook user can be a part of a conversation between a group of people and no one is aware, as if someone is overhearing their conversation in the park, both able to actively engage with the exchange at anytime. Community dialogue can be created through the creation of groups, events, the posting of links, where sharing, common interests, debate and discussion begin as digital conversations on Facebook that shift into interactions in social presence.

However, while social presence may allow the positive characteristics of public space to prosper to a greater degree than social media, Facebook's revelation of *online eaves-dropping* is trademark of a condition of social media that social presence cannot provide. Social scientists refer to it as *ambient awareness* - the receipt of up-to-the-minute status updates on what people in a person's community are doing, thinking, and feeling. In the physical realm, ambient awareness could be most closely described as being near an individual, sensing their body language, ticks, mood, or stray comments out of the corner

of your eye. In the digital realm, it becomes an understanding of the cause of these physical manifestations as if you could read the person's mind, and unlike the physical world, it comes in the form of deliberate actions - a Facebook or Twitter update, the change of a profile picture, a comment, the posting of a link, the announcement to attend an event, and so on. It is not a third person interpretation of a person's disposition, it is that person consciously telling the world about him or herself. Clive Thompson, journalist for *The New York Times*, describes ambient awareness as follows: *"This is the paradox of ambient awareness. Each little update - each individual bit of social information - is insignificant on its own, even supremely mundane. But taken together, over time, the little snippets coalesce into a surprisingly sophisticated portrait of your friends' and family members' lives, like thousands of dots making a pointillist painting. This was never before possible, because in the real world, no friend would bother to call you up and detail the sandwiches she was eating. The ambient information becomes like 'a type of Extra Sensory Perception...'"* (Gardner 2009). Given ambient awareness, when people do connect in social presence, it is almost as if they are picking up an ongoing conversation in the middle, perhaps even discussing shared awareness of other people based on their public broadcasting of their thoughts.

The complementing qualities of social media and social presence accompanied by the precedents of the Google and Facebook headquarters make the development of an interface typology all the more relevant and viable. However, as discussed in the previous section, the process of creating this typology must be radically different than its pragmatic and business-minded precursors, retaining and celebrating its digital sociability as an embodiment in the physical

world. Such a typology demands a site that reinforces the interaction that must be inherent to the architecture. The site must be socially and culturally relevant, publicly accessible, iconic, and urban, where as the sites of the Facebook and Google Headquarters are private and secluded. Given the potential enhancement of social presence via social media, and the essentiality of social presence to public space, the most appropriate location for a social-media architecture is in direct connection with and proximity to urban civic space. Furthermore, even creating the public space itself, simultaneously stating the paradoxical duality of both its physical *groundedness* and its indeterminacy in the digital *social*.

6.2.0 Forming the Formless: A Design Strategy for a Social-Media Architecture

Through the discussion of the interface typology and in regard to the overall study of this thesis, it became clear that a more specific examination of the typology through the comprehensive design of a case study building would be intrinsic to understanding the future development of an architecture synchronized to social media technology. To avoid entanglement in the unresolved positive and negative intricacies of social interactions via existing networks of Facebook or Twitter, I found it more interesting and more theoretically valuable to consider the potential of what social media could *be* above what social media *is* in its present form. I chose to explore a hypothetical social networking site that would shed greater implications for collective benefit as a connecting medium among humanitarian organizations and between humanitarian organizations and the public as a catalyst for greater communication and information sharing regarding socially-conscious practices.

The inspiration for this study evolved in the summer of 2009, during which I volunteered for Architecture for Humanity as an online juror for a humanitarian design competition they were hosting at the time. In the process of judging, I became fascinated by the Internet's ability to facilitate such a large operation between complete strangers - myself, other jurors, applicants, and several members of Architecture for Humanity. Without any physical human interaction between myself and anyone else, the competition was orchestrated and concluded as a means for achieving social good. Wanting to develop this concept further, I considered the value of social media as a means to reducing redundancies in the aid delivery through increased interactions between over one million, eight hundred thousand registered humanitarian organizations in an effort to achieve the expectations set

forth by the Millennium Development Goals and Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness [*The Millennium Development Goals is a publication adopted in 2000 by world leaders committed to finding solutions for several global issues such as poverty, education, health care, and global partnerships by the year 2015* (MDG Task Force 2000). *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness took place in 2005 as a follow-up meeting among global leaders for a five-year progress review of the Millennium Development Goals. Both documents outline goals for reducing redundancies in aid delivery through methods of ownership, harmonization, alignment, communication, and mutual accountability among world leaders and humanitarian organizations* (High Level Forum 2005)].

Social media has already revealed its value following recent natural disasters such as the earthquake that struck Haiti in early 2010 or the earthquake and ensuing tsunami in Japan in early 2011. The rebuild effort was not only fomented by social media as an information resource, but the public could directly participate as donors by sending a text message to a five-digit number to donate ten dollars to the Red Cross as just one example. Learning from Haiti, in addition to being an avenue for acquiring financial aid, social media has been employed as an organizational and informational tool following the recent quake in Japan. Google developed the *Google Crisis Response* - a link on its homepage that takes Internet users directly to several resources through which information can be acquired and donations can be made. Clicking the link brings up a summary of the devastation, and provides a box for donating to pertinent humanitarian organizations involved in the recovery process (Google Crisis Response 2011). Well known for their *twenty-percent time*, where Google allows its engineers

to use twenty percent of their work day toward innovative pursuits, Google has issued that this time be devoted to the recovery efforts of the earthquake. The result of this effort is the Google Crisis Response Team, which is now a permanent global unit of the company. Within seventy hours of the quake in Haiti, the team had created the *Person Finder* network, which helped victims discover friends and family members after a natural disaster. The page went live just twelve hours following the earthquake in Japan (Goldman 2011). In addition to Google, other efforts were made via social media immediately following the earthquake in Japan. Jeff Jarvis, contributor to the *Huffington Post*, proposed a standard for reporting disaster-related information through Twitter hashtags - */jpquake* for witnesses and affected victims, and *#jpquake* for public discussion. Jarvis suggests this would allow Twitter to become a resource for victims to get pertinent information about disaster relief, get in touch with loved ones, etc., without getting lost in the crowd of the general conversation about the disaster (Jarvis 2011). Even Facebook pages have emerged to encourage donations and send messages and photos of encouragement to those who are displaced. The Apple Computer company has keyed in on the relevancy of social media following such a disaster as it leaves its stores open across Japan to act as communication hubs allowing people to use the company's resources to access social media and contact family members (Electronista Staff 2011).

Given the expanding humanitarian role of social media, the case study embarked with the creation of a hypothetical social networking website that would aggregate aid information to become the primary hub for humanitarian organizations to communicate with each other or with individuals seeking aid or searching for an outlet to offer

their resources and services. The social network, titled the *Open Aid Network*, could become a means for humanitarian organizations to interaction with other social groups, volunteers, supporters, advocates, and employees more efficiently (see *Appendix B* for a graphic representation of the Open Aid Network as a social connector). The Open Aid Network would be modeled after Facebook, following similar branding, site structure, interface, etc. Non-government organizations would join the site as users, instantly creating a searchable database of humanitarian organizations around the world with up-to-date user-generated content by which the general public could make more informed decisions concerning their own involvement and support of these organizations.



figure 6.12 The logo for the conceptual social networking site The Open Aid Network, serving as the case study for this thesis

The homepage for the Open Aid Network would be modeled after searchable databases such as the query tool used on WebMD. While on WebMD a user supplies a wealth of information including symptoms, location of discomfort, family history, etc., for the website to propose the most likely health-related issue, on the Open Aid Network, users would likewise provide information such as their need, address, or volunteer interests, allowing the social network to then suggest the most relevant humanitarian organizations in terms of geographical proximity, resources, and areas of assistance, providing the NGOs' individual websites and contact information. It is comparable to a 911 resource but for receiving or giving long-term assistance. Likewise, humanitarian organizations could use this tool to connect with other organizations to collaborate, plan events, raise money, share resources, and so on. The site would be an organizational resource for aligning aid delivery (resources, volunteers, donations, etc.) to disaster areas as large as recent earthquakes in Japan to helping an

elderly person get in touch with the local Key Club because he or she needs help shoveling his or her sidewalks. In this way, the Open Aid Network is not another humanitarian organization itself, but acts as an extension of all humanitarian organizations, just as traditional social media acts as an extension of public space.

Following the growth pattern evidenced by Google and Facebook and a multitude of other companies born out of the Internet, The Open Aid Network would eventually require physical space for employees, engineers, administration, and server space. Social presence would

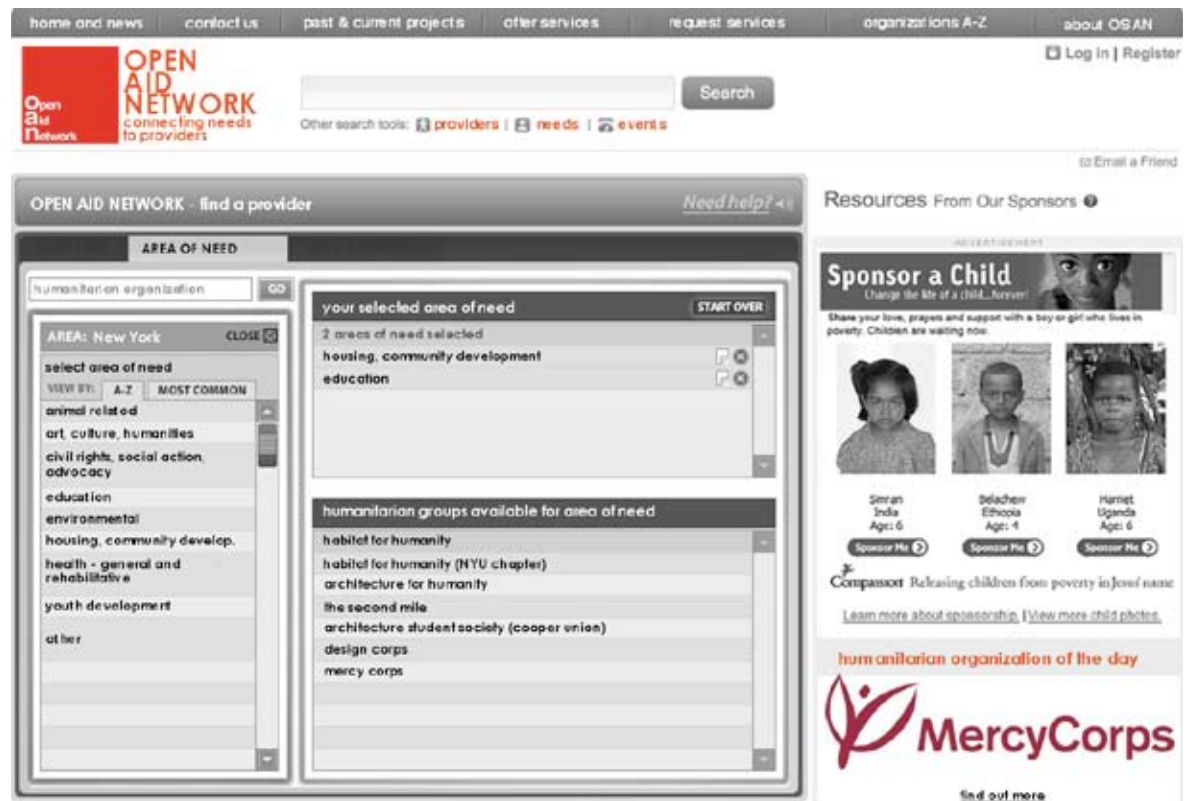


figure 6.13 The proposed homepage for the Open Aid Network as a searchable database for finding organizations by location, resources and area of focus

inevitably become a necessary component of the social network, and more so, of an effort to harmonize humanitarian efforts. The case study dictated an opportunity to explore the interface typology as a complete physical translation of a social network's digital presence, retaining its initial public social purpose as an integral function of the physical architecture. The architecture could go beyond supporting pragmatic needs by also providing space for humanitarian organization meetings, fundraising events, civil spaces for protest and rallies, and act as an amenity for its local neighborhood (See *Appendix C* for a diagram of the relationship between social media and social presence as they pertain to harmonizing humanitarian efforts). The building, titled the *Open Aid Center*, would be in complete synchronization with the Open Aid Network, endlessly manifesting the digital and digitizing the physical in real-time.

Designing a social-media architecture first suggests a thorough understanding of the functional processes of a social networking website before its physical translation can be made. *How does a social network operate? Who connects with whom and why? How do they connect? How do they navigate, circulate, and engage with the site? Lastly, what information do they seek, why, and for what purpose?* Figure 6.14 is a diagrammatic exploration of the practical means by which a social network such as Facebook operates, and how it is funded, branded, and used, all in consideration of how the Open Aid Network and a social-media architecture would likely mirror these operations as a model. The flow chart systemizes a design strategy for a social-media architecture by correlating the steps of creating a social network in the digital to the process of locating and characterizing its emblematic architecture in the physical - thinking of the building

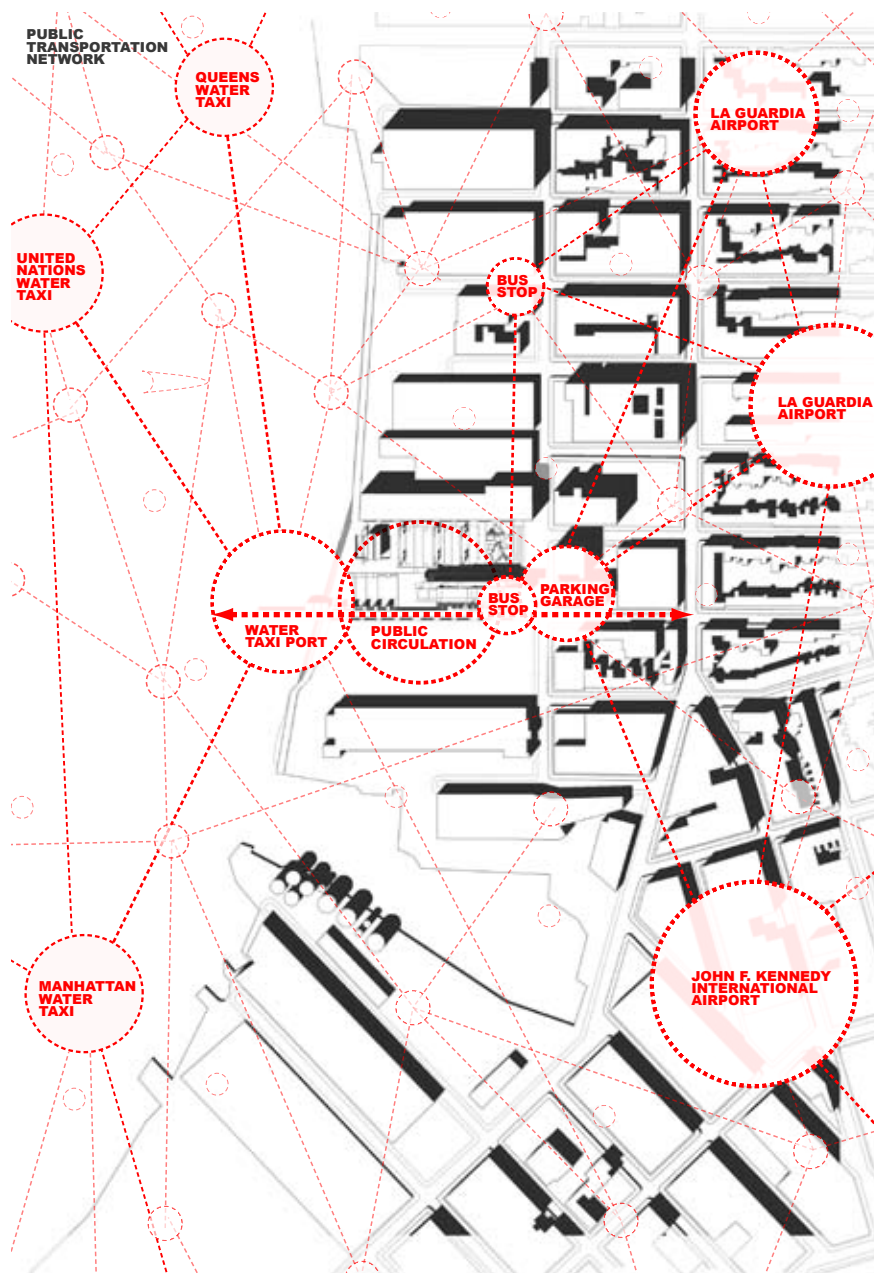


figure 6.15 The building site on the East River in the Greenpoint Neighborhood of Brooklyn, NY. Chosen for it's proximity to major and minor public transportation hubs in proximity to an Iconic urban environment

complex on Manhattan Island (see *Appendix D* for photographs of the site). The site offers a complex narrative between the ongoing post-industrial revival of the East River waterfront and its proximity to major and minor public transportation hubs of the Hunterspoint train station, La Guardia and John F. Kennedy Airport, the water taxicab network, and the public bus and biking networks of the Greenpoint neighborhood, while the international spirit of New York City fosters the global presence of social media that the architecture must imbue (see *Appendix E* for a diagram mapping the global presence of the architecture through New York City).

If the social network is the medium for connecting people in the digital realm, then public transportation networks are the medium for connecting people in the built environment. Establishing an architecture on the site would require a selection of program bent around both public and private social interaction, tying them in to the greater context of a global circulation system - an undertaking the existing transportation infrastructure of New York City already accomplishes. Foremost, was a need to enable population of the site by connecting the building to the city's layers of circulation through circulatory program pieces including a bus stop, water taxi station, parking deck, and an extension to the proposed public waterfront promenade for pedestrian access. Each transportation piece became intrinsic to incorporating the global circulation network to the layout and circulation pattern of the architecture .

Instituting the greater connections of the site created a framework in which to tie the larger design moves of a public architecture as the anchor piece of a now highly accessible civic space. Continuing



figure 6.16 The layers and scales of circulation surrounding the site: top - the airport network, middle - the water taxi network, bottom - the vehicle and bus network

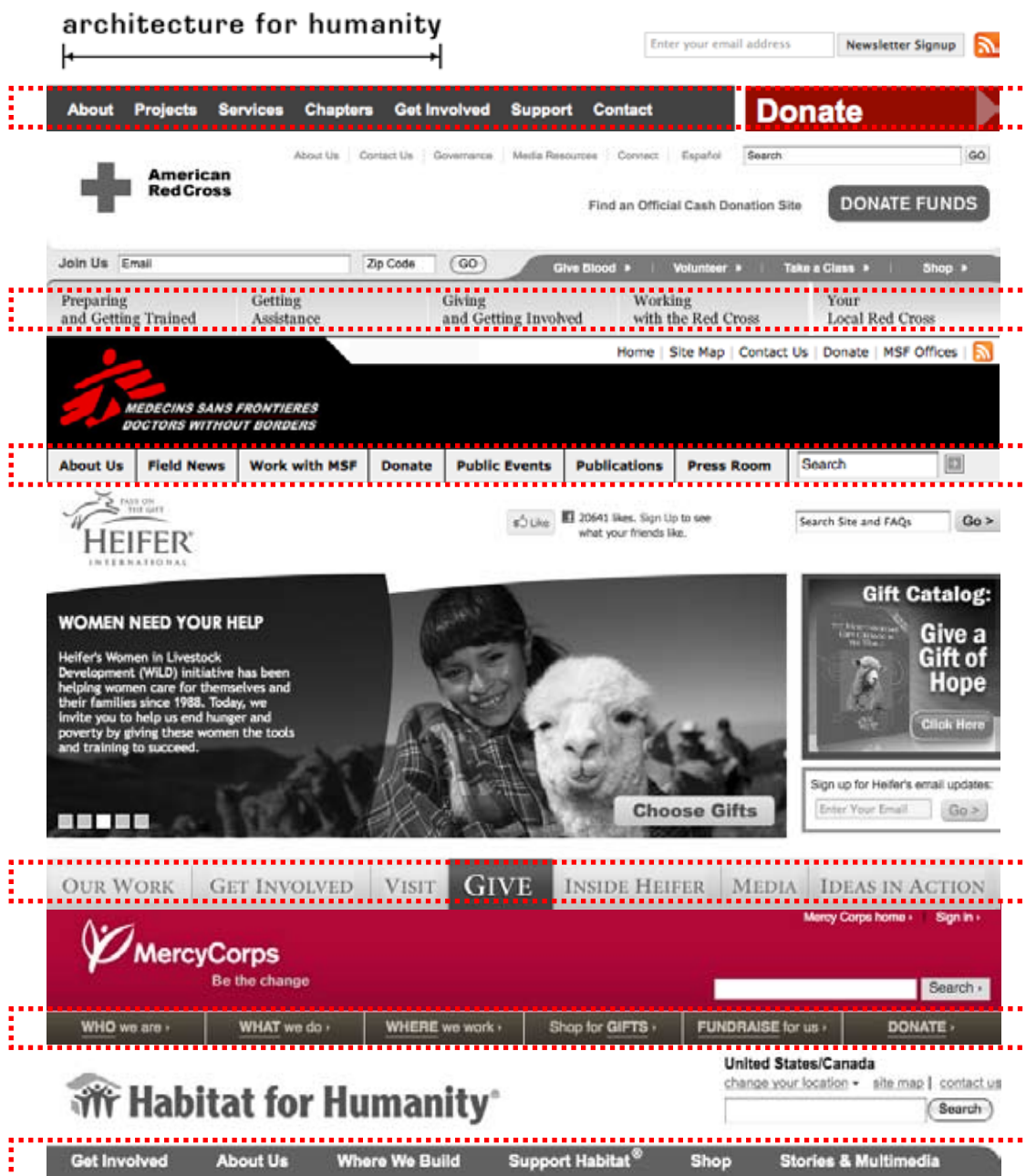


figure 6.17 Images of the website toolbars of several well-known humanitarian organizations emphasizing the common objectives outlined by the Millennium Development Goals (Architecture for Humanity 2011, American Red Cross 2011, Doctors Without Borders 2011, Heifer International 2011, MercyCorps 2011, Habitat for Humanity 2011)

the social-network-to-architecture analogy, with the site as the URL, the architecture can be described as the website itself - as Internet navigation correlates to public transportation on the site, the architecture concretizes the circulation of the website. In search of a design strategy for spatial sequence and movement in the interface typology, I looked to the circulation pattern of existing humanitarian organization webpages. In summarization of the Millennium Development Goals, humanitarian organizations fundamentally pursue a set of standard objectives - to raise awareness of their cause, obtain financial support, provide services, and recruit volunteers (MDG Task Force 2000). The importance of these applications is made apparent when viewing the websites of humanitarian organizations, which often list these goals as primary links in the site's toolbar. The toolbar acts as the circulation spine of the website. Like the functional purpose of a building corridor connecting spaces, users navigate moving in and out of the spaces delineated in the toolbar. Here, the word *movement* is used figuratively

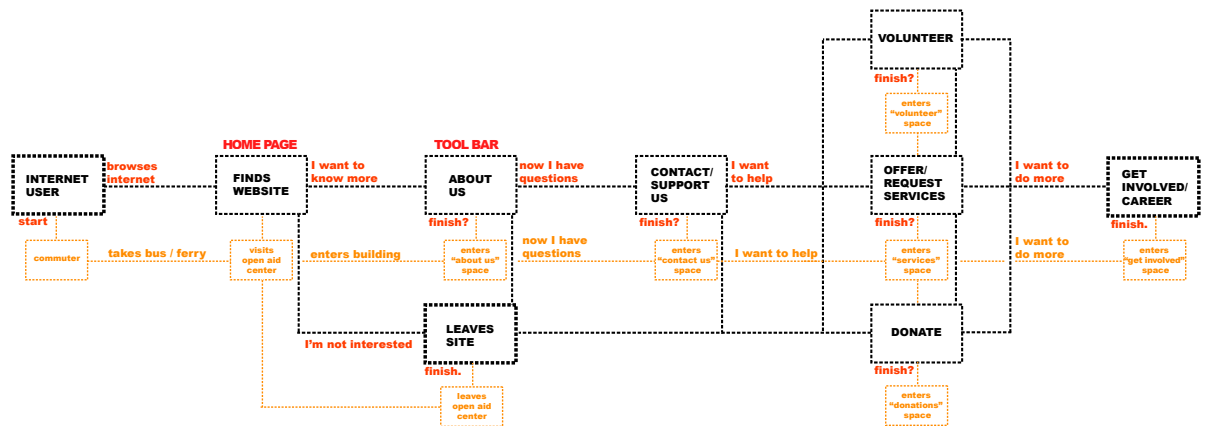


figure 6.18 Diagramming the presumed navigation of the Open Aid Network website as a strategy for creating an architectural circulation pattern that is demonstrative of Internet *movement*

to represent what can be more accurately described as a sequence of decisions, which is not entirely different than navigating physical space, but is done with a different context of time spent “in motion.” The spatial sequence of website navigation is rather succinct - the space is the webpage, and the passageways are the links. *Figure 6.18* diagrams the probable circulation pattern followed by visitors to a humanitarian website as a series of decisions based on the degree of involvement, from low involvement to high involvement, that the visitor intends. It is a progression from *about us* - learning more about the organization, to *contact/support us* - wanting to know more or advocating the purpose, to *offer/request services* - volunteering or donating, to a concluding level of involvement of *get involved* - resolving to make a long-term commitment to the organization as



figure 6.19 the physical translation of website navigation, a series of choices and degrees of involvement, integrated into the circulation pattern of the building with exterior stairs and entrances, and the larger public transportation networks through the public promenade

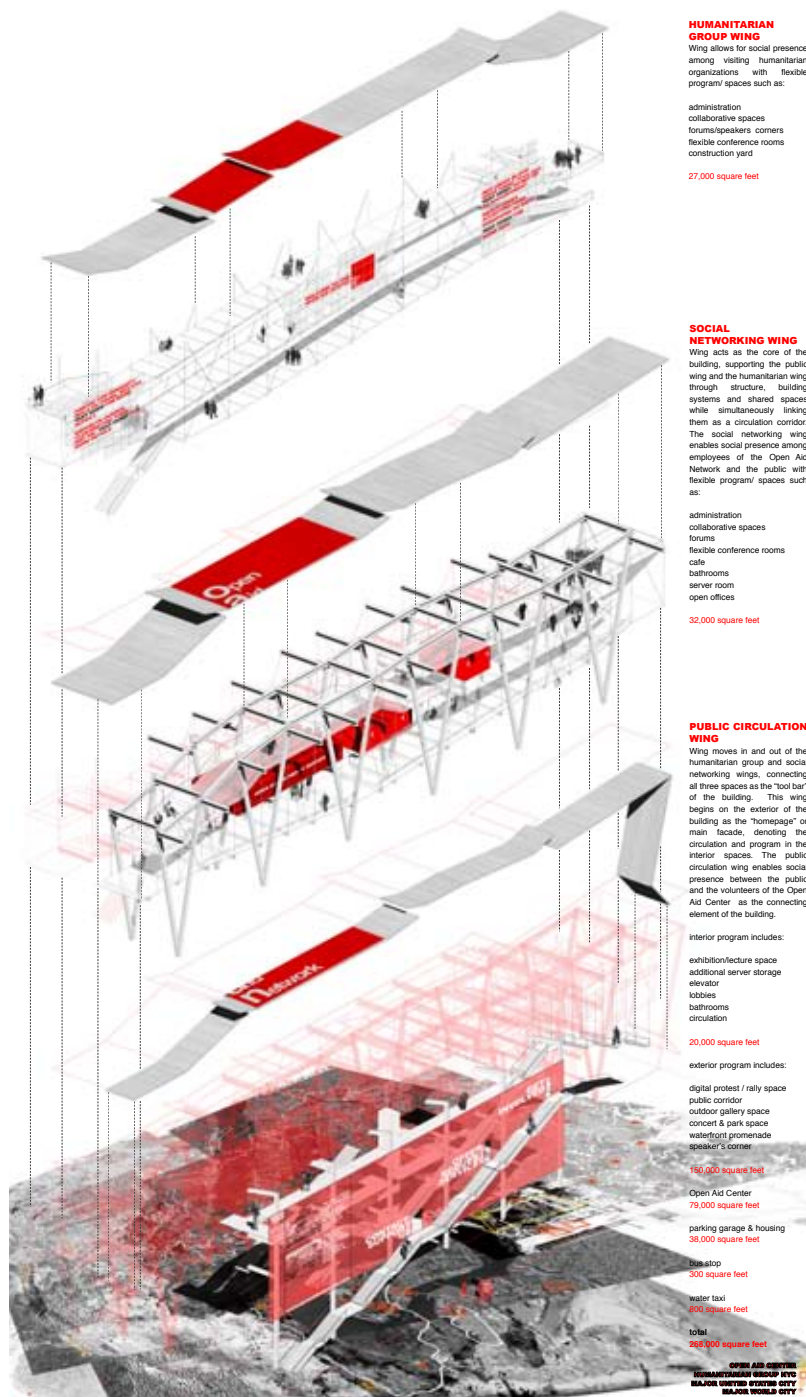


figure 6.20 The digital facade of the building becomes the interface between the digital and the physical - the facade is the digitization of the results of social presence in the interior spaces

a career choice or otherwise. Translating website navigation into physical circulation becomes intrinsic to the southern facade of the Open Aid Center as a facilitator of self-determined spatial sequences. The public facade engages the public promenade that connects the water taxi station to the bus stop and parking garage as the *face* of the building, suggestive of the homepage of the Open Aid Network. Digital screens on the facade synchronize to the Open Aid Network, giving real time updates of humanitarian efforts, upcoming events, opportunities to get involved, etc. Exterior circulation on the public facade serves as the *toolbar* of the building, inviting the public to participate through the same navigational decisions they would face

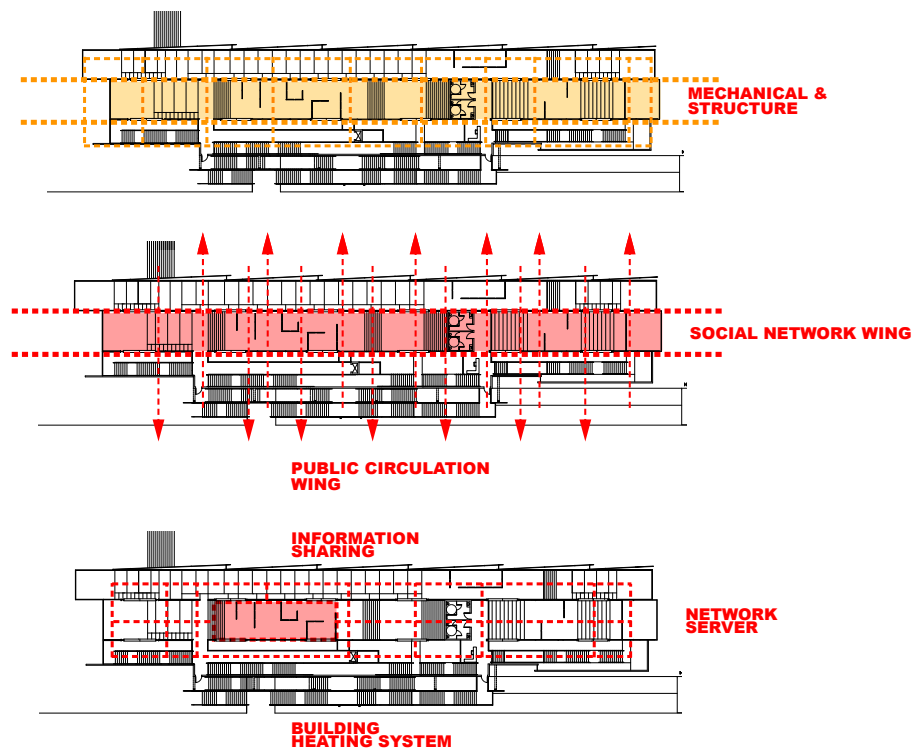


figure 6.21 The interior spaces are subdivided into three collaborative circulation zones - the public zone, the social networking zone, and the humanitarian zone

on the Open Aid Network's or any humanitarian group's website - *about us, contact/support us, offer/request services, get involved* - the public facade becomes the point of interface between the digital and the physical. The efforts taking place as social presence on the interior of the building are digitized as information on the Open Aid Network and the displays of the public facade, while the Open Aid network fosters the social presence of the spaces inside.

The created space of the building is ultimately social and circulatory. What is intriguing about Internet navigation is that it is an entirely self-determined movement through digital spaces, and so the architecture must embody a sense of a self-determined spatial sequence, which begins with the decision of which *link*, or door, to enter through on the public facade. Upon entering, a visitor is greeted by an information lobby, followed by a spatial layout of a fractured floor plan and section, composed of three primary circulation zones of collaborative spaces elevated as if floating off the ground floor. The three zones are the *public circulation zone* on the public facade, the *humanitarian circulation zone* on the opposite facade, and the *social network circulation zone* in between the two to become the physical and symbolic connection of the public to the humanitarian organizations. Each zone is a complex arrangement of collaborative meeting spaces, which are a series of offset platforms, terracing to perform as both a functional collaborative space and a circulation pathway of ramp and stair. These *zones* are offset spaces in plan and section to allow for ambient awareness, fruitful eaves-dropping so to speak, of information shared in neighboring spaces. Lining each zone are digital walls allowing for immediate video conferencing, and live feed to the Open Aid Network connects the public in real-time to lectures and symposia.

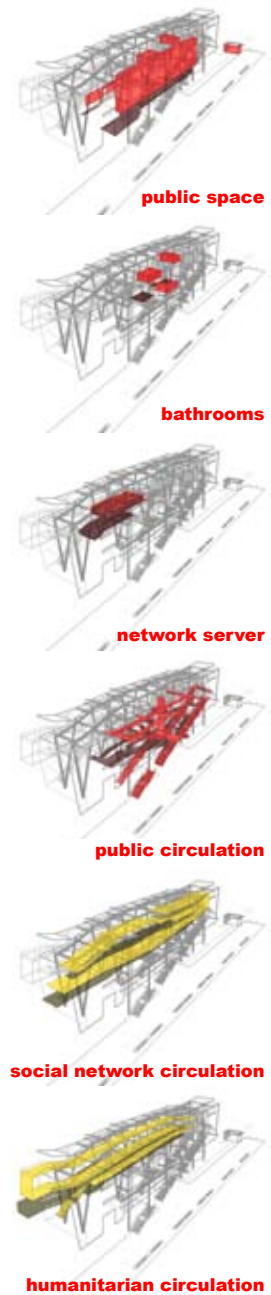


figure 6.22 Programmatic layout of the Open Aid Center

While each zone is a series of collaborative circulation spaces, the program and purpose of each zone varies among all three as their names may suggest. The social network zone is for computer engineers, programmers and those involved in the general maintenance of the website. As the physical connector of all three zones, structure, mechanical equipment and the network servers are located here as well. The humanitarian zone is intended to be flexible to accommodate different size groups coming and going from the building, with adaptable spaces sized to be a small office or a large forum space. The public circulation zone is a continuation of the exterior *toolbar*, or circulation

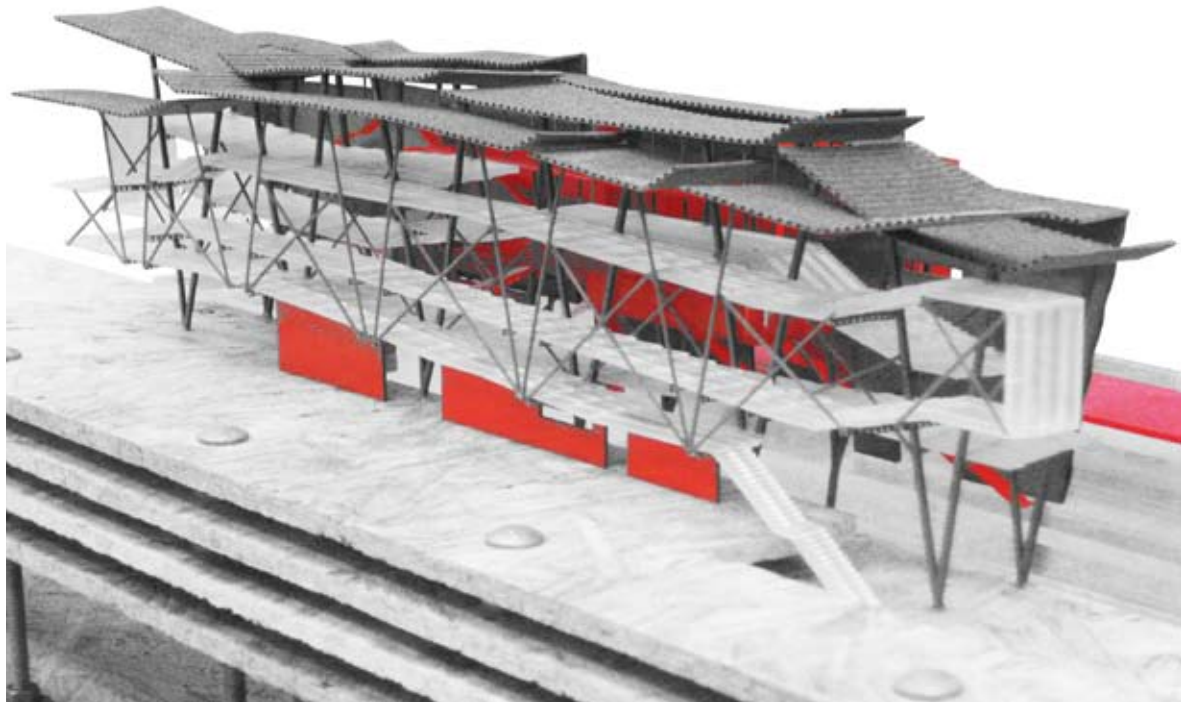


figure 6.23 physical model of the Open Aid Center, showing the elevated and offset collaborative circulation spaces of the social network and humanitarian zones, while the public circulation moves in and out of these spaces

spaces, plugging in and out of the social network and humanitarian zones with catwalks, stairways, ramps and elevators. Lobby spaces and bathrooms are located along these passage spaces (see *Appendix F* for longitudinal and transverse sections through the building, and *Appendix G* for floor plans). The ground floor is a multi-function space with moving walls to partition the otherwise open volume. This space allows for exhibitions of humanitarian projects, events such as blood drives or benefit dinners, conference rooms for local businesses, or public lectures.

The exterior program spaces are purposely open and indeterminate to allow the public to claim ownership of them and describe their function as rightful civic space. However, infrastructures are in place to allow social media to supplement human interaction in these spaces. For example, live audio and video feed of rallies and protests can be accessed through the Open Aid Network, while digital screens in the protest space display uploaded twitter and text messages from the public so participation in the event can take place regardless of an individuals geographical location. The same is true for a provided concert and public venue space where fundraising events, benefit concerts, or community recreational activities may take place. These events occur for the local population to enjoy and participate in social presence, while the rest of the world participates through social media and live feeds on the Open Aid Network (see *figure 6.24* and *figure 6.25* for images of these spaces and the ground floor lecture space).

While these public spaces and the overall design of the architecture speak to the global connectivity of social media, it is equally important in social presence for the building to be grounded in the local community

and give a sense of place. The heavy steel structure supporting both the building and the digital public facade symbolize this grounding of global connectivity in to the local, while reclaimed industrial materials of steel and corrugated aluminum from the neighboring abandoned factory buildings. This material reclamation creates a skin for the architecture emblematic of a predominantly American vernacular as it chronicles the narrative of the site's industrial, blue-collared history. In coordination with the ongoing rejuvenation of the Brooklyn East River waterfront, the site continues the riverfront promenade with walkways, green spaces, and cascaded seating where the



figure 6.24 A rally takes place outside of the Open Aid Center as live feed and digital screens allow for global participation and encouragement to those who are physically present



figure 6.25 Top - a lecture takes places as viewers tune in from around the globe, and the lecturer takes questions from Internet users. below - people gather for a benefit concert broadcasted on the Open Aid Network

community would come to enjoy views of Manhattan Island and the annual Independence Day fireworks display. Along the open public space (where the concert events would occur) are utility hook ups of electricity and water for community recreational activities, fairs, street vendors, artists, outdoor exhibits - any function the community sees fit for enhancing the sociability and ownership of this space. As the Open Aid network is an extension of all humanitarian groups, the Open Aid Center is an extension of the community.

Section 6.1.0 The Architecture of the Social describes social media as the becoming of a second Internet, it demands connection from individuals or groups who wish to remain socially relevant as social media grows. As such, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, LinkedIn - all of these social networking websites permeate the entirety of the Internet. Their digital existence is ubiquitous, Their reach extends beyond the digital boundaries of URLs and individual websites, and their presence is recognizable through their branding. Few public websites exist that do not host links for sharing their webpage through social networks. The omnipresence of social networks on the Internet introduces the final speculative question of the interface typology - how, and to what extent will its digital ubiquity be manifested in the built environment? How would the Open Aid Network become an pervasive component of the physical realm as it expands in the digital? The paralleling condition of the virtual with the real suggests that the social networks global presence will become a universal manifestation. *Figure 6.26* is a graphic conceptualization of what this omnipresent state could potentially mean for the physical presence of the Open Aid Center as a precursor to the imminent expansion of future social networks.



figure 6.26 Social networking sites like Facebook can be described as becoming the *Internet within the Internet*, it is omnipresent, it permeates the web appearing on every webpage anymore. How would this diffusion translate into physical space? The above images show the Open Aid Network manifested as a universally recognizable entity.

6.3.0 Deconstructing the Social Isolation Paradigm

While buildings such as the Googleplex show the inevitable translation of online social spaces to architecture, the Open Aid Center expresses this translation in a scenario where the element of public interaction in social media is retained in the architecture. Where as the isolation bias of mass media gradually detached the neighborhood from the urban center, the family from the neighborhood, the family member from the family, the integration bias of social media may gradually stitch together these separations. The disparity between these media relative to changes in their collective influence suggests a probable beginning of a new era that is already being defined by the social integration paradigm. As city growth parallels social media growth, any sense of a dichotomy between real life and a virtual life will likely be further marginalized regarding social interaction. As Michael Harday, author of *The City in the Age of Web 2.0*, suggests: “*we need to treat Internet media as continuous with and embedded in other social spaces, that they happen with mundane social structures and relations that they may transform but that they cannot escape into a self-enclosed cyberian apartness*” (Harday 2007).

Like Harday suggests, the concept of a *social-media architecture* in the built environment, while being iconized in the interface typology, is certainly not limited to such a building, just as mass media architecture is not limited to the headquarters of General Electric or Walt Disney. The social integration paradigm will permeate through the urban landscape as a design praxis brought forth by social media as the social component of the emerging deep-seated process of sustainability. However, socially-connected cities cannot begin anew. Deconstructing the social isolation paradigm and cultivating the social integration paradigm both involve working within the constraints of the

existing built environment. The institutionalized, lagging architectures that have not earned a culturally significant narrative warranting preservation must be dealt with through retrofitting, demolition, or otherwise - all of which are resource intensive processes (Brand 1994). Nevertheless, early signs of this undertaking are already surfacing in American cities as physical manifestations of a paradigm shift. Small subversions of the social isolation paradigm in urban space are occurring as translations of antiquated architectures into community minded resources. The reclamation of the once industrial riverfronts of New York City and Pittsburgh for public green space, the translation of urban industrial warehouses to residential spaces in cities like New York, Pittsburgh and Chicago, the adaptation of Times Square from principally automobile accessible to pedestrian only space, the

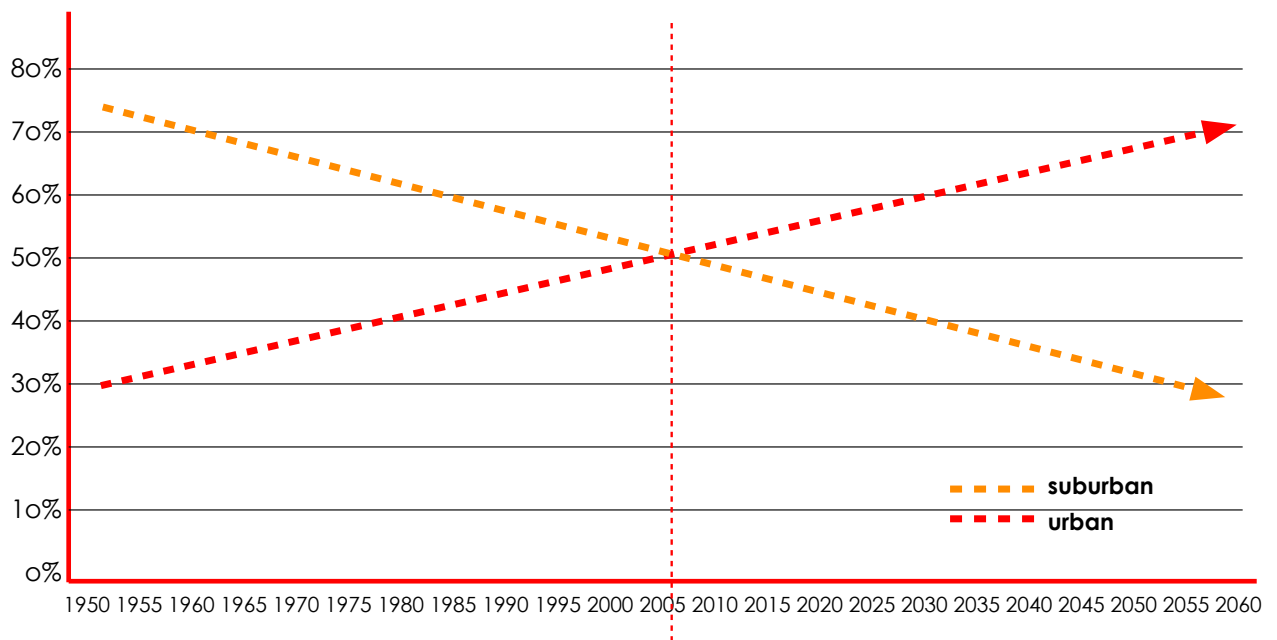


figure 6.27 The United Nation's prospects of urbanization over the next fifty years, predicting a doubling in the urban population as rural population is halved

creation of Millennium Park in Chicago in 2004 - these are just a few of many examples of the social isolation paradigm gaining ground in the built environment. Although the spaces may not be ideal for their new function (other than Millennium Park), they are beginning to address the requisites of the human condition that were previously neglected.

These small pockets of socially-minded transformations are creating disruptions in the automated fabric of the urban setting that are only

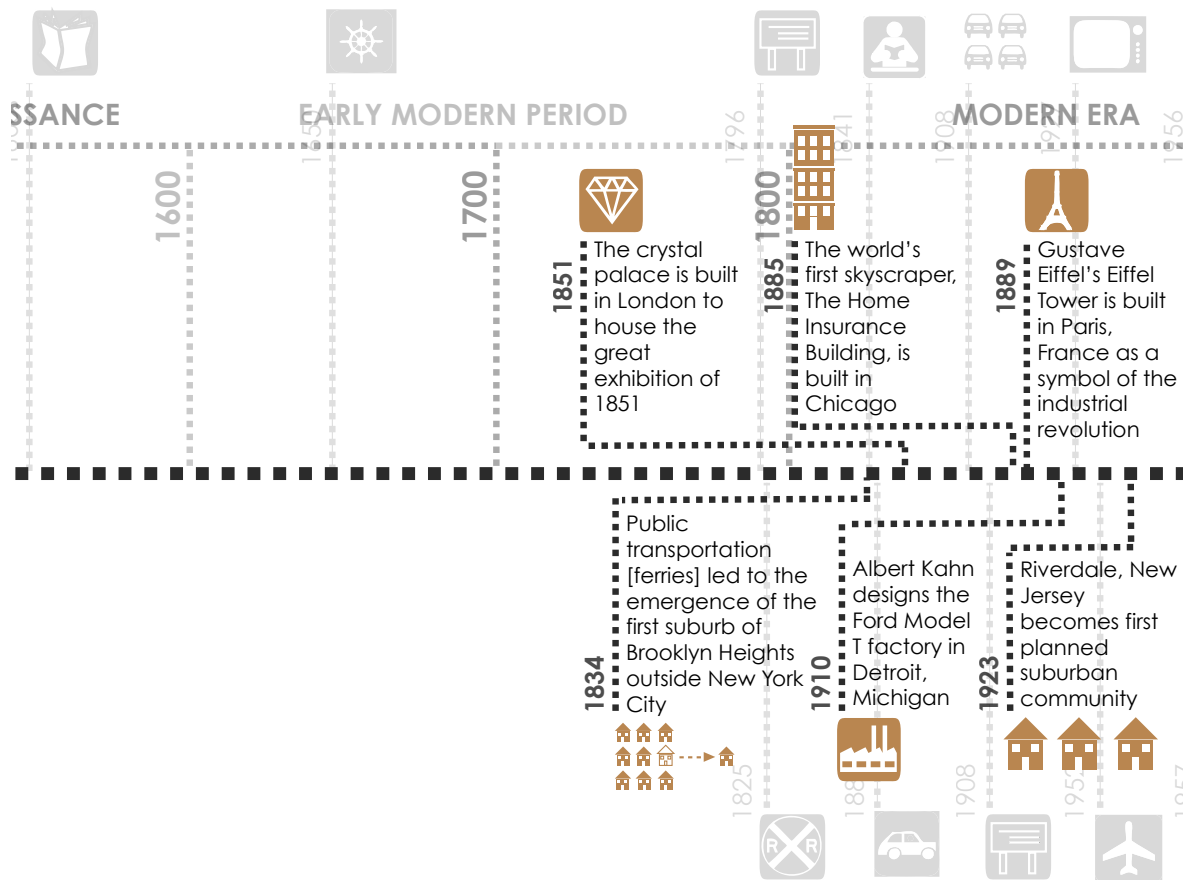
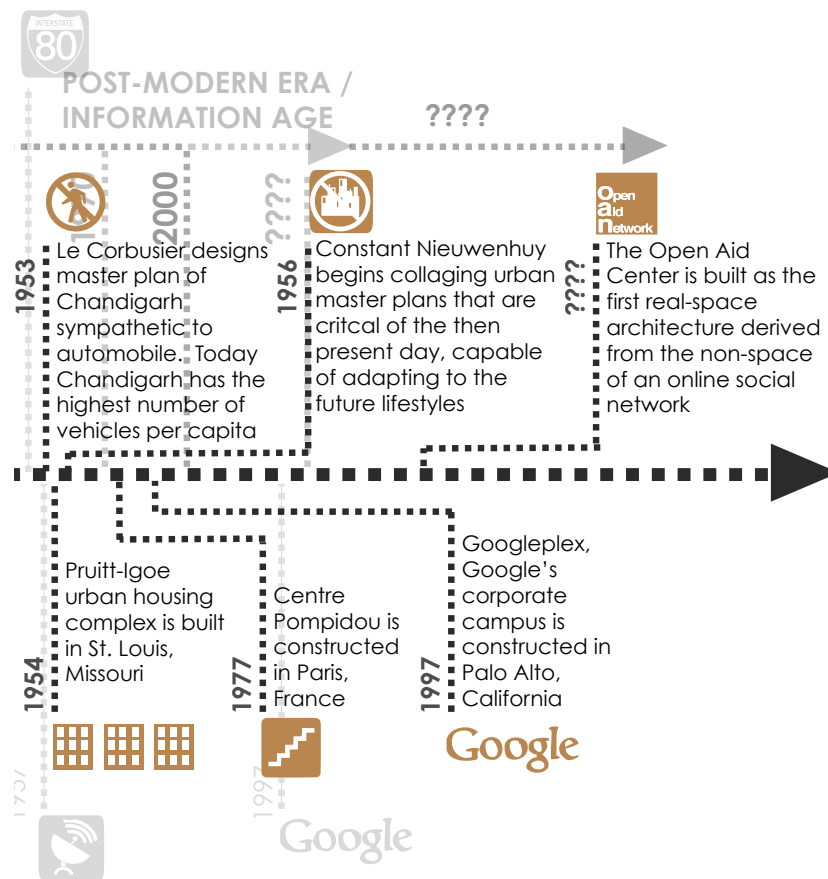


figure 6.28 the chronology of architecture relative to mass media development from the Renaissance to today. (continued on next page)

microcosms of broader changes taking place at every scale of the built environment. At the urban scale, The United Nations reports on urbanization that the American urban population will double by the year 2050 while rural population will be nearly cut in half, compelling our cities to become more attune to the human condition (United Nations Urbanization Prospects 2011). The neighborhood scale is experiencing a re-emergence of public farmers markets in cities across the United States. These public markets re-connect people with their



local economy and food production, re-instating the social component of an economy. The number of farmers markets in American cities grew by nearly three hundred percent between 1994 and 2010 (United States Department of Agriculture 2011). Lastly, at the domestic scale, the size of the average family home has steadily decreased over the last decade, peaking at over 2,521 square feet in 2007 to 2,377 square feet in 2010, and this number is trending to fall to below 2,000 square feet by 2015 (Quint 2010). This is certainly not a naive suggestion that these demographic changes are a direct result of social media, just as mass media was not the sole perpetrator of the built environment's isolating state. Data from the National Association of Home Builders

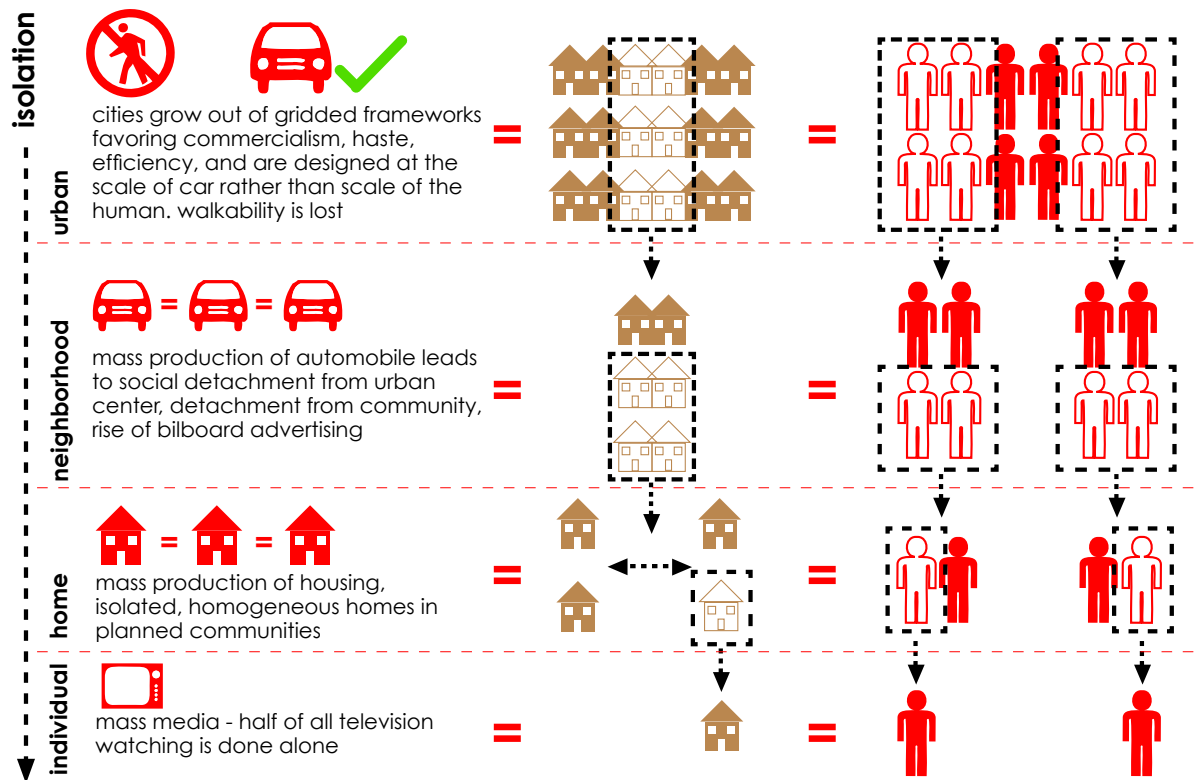


figure 6.29 Reminder of the scales of social isolation (urban, neighborhood, home and the individual)

attributes a decreasing home size to a collective resolution to avoid large heating and cooling costs and develop the quality of smaller spaces (Quint 2010). The underlying cause of changes in collective priorities is most likely a consequence of an ongoing, gradual anthropological shift of deep-seated processes of institutionalized behavior from commercial to sustainable in the United States, with the inclinations of each deep-seated process being reinforced by its accompanying media technologies. Nevertheless, the outcome of this large shift, coupled with the growing social integration paradigm fostered by social media, is producing positive changes in the social condition at each scale of the built environment.

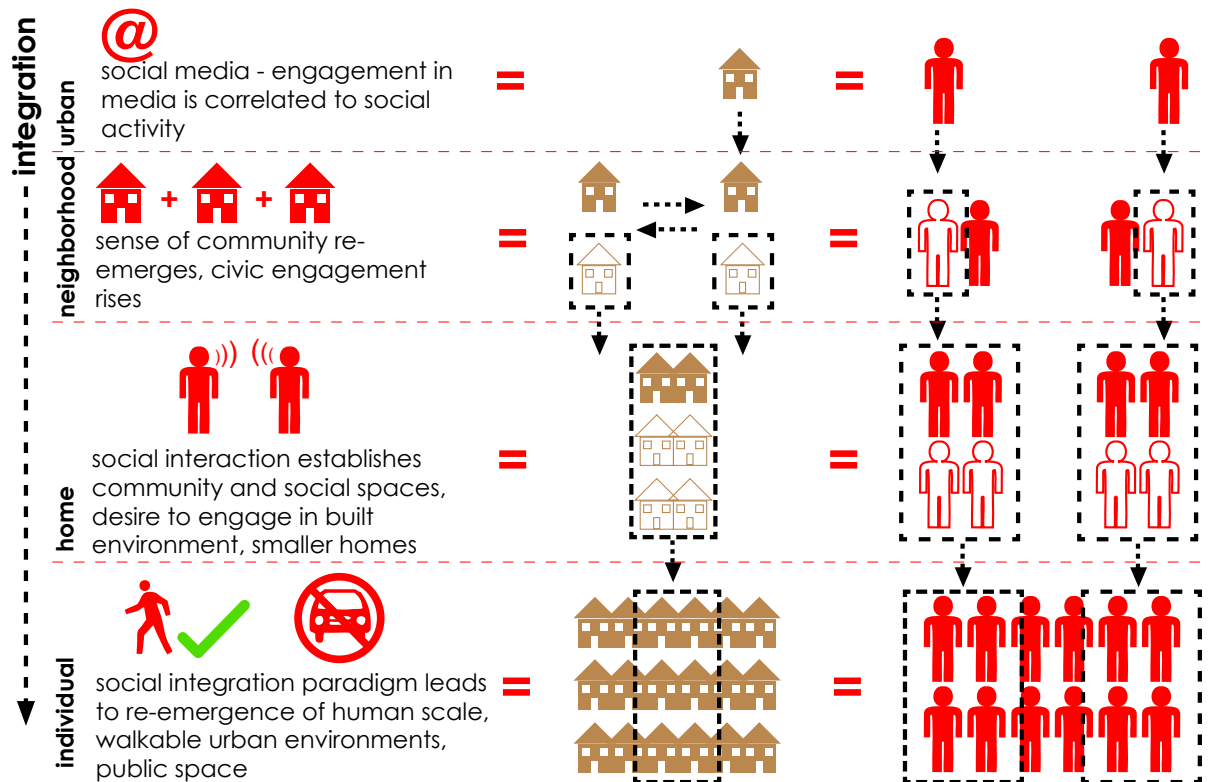
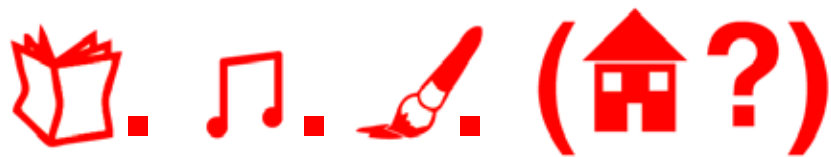


figure 6.30 Scales of social integration (urban, neighborhood, home and the individual) re-instituting the individual with a social society

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS



7.1.0 Thesis Summary: Significance to Architecture

“One of the things which we are searching for is a form of architecture which, unlike, classical architecture, is not perfect and finite upon completion...We are looking for an architecture rather like some music and poetry which can actually be changed by the users, an architecture of improvisation” - Richard Rogers (Brand 1994)

While the underlying goal of this thesis is to scrupulously investigate the underlying institutional frameworks guiding the design of and incentive for creating a building, it is equally an attempt to encapsulate the zeigeist of two distinct periods, mass media and social media, to demonstrate that their separate stories are and will be a historical record archived by architecture. That if all of the factors, conscious and unconscious, that influence the design of a set of related building in the past can be uncovered and exhibited, it would provide a rough model by which social frameworks for architecture in the future can be predicted. While the details of that record can only be speculated through hypotheses of new building typologies and underlying social structures, one can be certain that whatever happens, it will be registered in architecture for all to see. That's the beauty of the subconscious and the unconscious in art, that no matter the artist's deliberate intentions, the underlying principles are always revealed in the final creation, though their existence may not become evident until time warrants sufficient reflection on the piece of work - years, decades, perhaps even centuries must pass to appropriately place the creation in its greater context of a social milieu. As I write this now I can imagine with some degree of certainty that the paradigm of sustainability, the recent global recession, the revolutions in the Middle East - these are all factors affecting the product of this thesis beyond the institutions of architecture, media and my own upbringing

that I explicitly address. An understanding of other influential factors I can only speculate, and will also become apparent in time.

In consideration of contextual analysis, though this thesis attempts to define the indeterminacy of architecture as simultaneously art, function, cultural chronicler, and yet, to some degree none of these things. What I want to get across is that *architecture* is not a term to describe a building once it is built, it is a term that the building either earns or forfeits over time as its cultural role is defined, and its functionality, for better or worse, takes shape. While all buildings eventually become institutions in the built environment, they do not all necessarily lag society. This was made evident by citing collective efforts to preserve monumental buildings such as the Colosseum and Eiffel Tower among thousands of others. Just as an individual can still be inspired by the ancient writings of greek philosophers, the poetry of shakespeare, the sculpture of Michelangelo, he or she can be inspired by the architecture of their time periods too. A resignation from preserving such culturally significant architecture is an admission that the profession has become entirely visual, that architecture can serve as precedent from photographs as equally as well as experiencing its spaces. The conversation on digital interaction versus social presence fully applies to the way we must now approach critique and precedent in architecture as well.

Secondly, it is important to consider the difference between what constitutes an *architecture* and what constitutes merely a *building*. Certainly not everything is worth manifesting through architecture, yet things not worth embodying are still preserved through buildings. I would suppose that the majority of the architecture discussed in

this thesis, as a manifestation of either mass media system, is more appropriately defined as *building*. None are truly a necessity, and all are essentially a product of consumption, the difference being the incentive for pursuing its consumption, which is also quite important.

Consequently, the collective changes conceptualized from a mass media paradigm to social media paradigm shift, the built environment of many cities, especially in the United States, may be largely anachronistic as they were designed with an architectural framework of social isolation. However, this is not to suggest that social-media architecture is immune to being regarded similarly in light of a newer paradigm in the distant future – such changes are inherent to periodization. However, what the social-media architecture symbolizes is the onset of a transportation toward a built environment that addresses the fundamental and timeless necessity human beings have for social interaction. In a sense, this is what a framework of adaptability for architecture demands - the building that strives to address the inherent needs of society endures. Though it may succumb to aesthetic alterations with changes in trends on the surface, the milieu of the architecture, its sensitivity to indispensable social spaces, and the accessibility of its design will inherently produce a relationship between the architecture and society, the building and owner, prompting long-term maintenance and care. The Pantheon in Rome stands as an exemplary model of this process. Though the Pantheon's skin and ornamentation submitted multiple times to fashionable restyling, the space, as social, awe-inspiring, and spiritual, was indispensable, and still functions in this manner today. The Pantheon was not one day consciously chosen for preservation, it has been permanently and instinctively nurtured for the social

and cultural indispensability of its design. As such, the Pantheon is a representational model of its familial city. Rome is timeless as a result of its sensitivity to our inherent needs for community and social interaction. Spaces for social, leisure, and local market economy embody and perpetuate an indispensable human social condition. Its space is intrinsic, its material pallet is relatable, and a collective sense of pride is evident in the environment the culture has developed.

While this thesis has also described the positives of mass-minded processes, the summation of their negative consequences can be characterized as a denial of the local. Under these deep-seated mass-minded processes, the aggregation of individuals as mass is the same as the aggregation of information to place is the same as the aggregation of policy to a single governing body - it is a bias toward the centralization of resources, abilities, knowledge, etc. Such centralization is a macrocosm of the architect who designs for a foreign culture or place, forfeiting an opportunity for the design to benefit from local knowledge. We see this as a manifestation in the discussion of mass-produced architecture in chapter four, where alien buildings such as McMansion homes are universally constructed without regard to local conditions of site, orientation, culture, landscape, resources, and so on. As the inculcator of a collective paradigm, mass-minded systems inadvertently attempt to make determinant the situations that require a certain degree of indeterminacy, of feedback, of local influence. This is the true worth of the sustainability process and social media as a vehicle returning to localization. While the Internet, as a mass-minded technology, attempts to make the information of the local accessible to the universal, the necessity of social presence, social media's gradual promotion toward the physical, may also

suggest a gradual emphasis on the importance of localization in the future. We cannot understand the information and intricacies of place through the Internet any more than we can thoroughly socialize via the digital alone. We cannot internalize local knowledge through the Internet any more than we can understand the spatial qualities of a building through video or photograph alone. An emphasis of the local is the pinnacle value underlying the potential benefit of the paradigms emerging from a shift in deep-seated processes and media systems. Relative to the dominate mass media outlets of the Big Six, social media such as Youtube, blogs and Twitter have already begun to illustrate this emphasis on locality. These social media outlets allow the people who experience news events firsthand to report on their experiences - a quality of information and reporting, a humanizing of content, which mass systems struggle to achieve. This is not to be taken as a naive suggestion that sustainability processes will come without their own negative consequences, the reduction of benefits from mass-minded systems such as affordability and accessibility being potential examples of this. However, over time, when a balance is struck between the universality of mass-minded processes and localization of sustainability, we will be in a better place.

The future discussed in this thesis is, relatively speaking, is not so far distant from where we are now. If mass media evolved over a period of half a millennium, perhaps this is the duration which a *social-media* environment would require to become normalized as well. Even still, placing ourselves in the time beyond the *social media era*, what we may see is this time frame being a transitional period between the era of work and mass-minded processes to potential period of a leisure society, where the term *mass* begins to refer to the populace, human

density, and a universal, collective built environment. In the 1960s and 70s, the futurist architect, Constant Nieuwenhuys, imagined urban spaces for an entirely leisure society - a culture where machines accomplished the mundane tasks necessary for living, freeing society to pursue creative interests and leisure activities. Constant imagined the existing urban environment would become so irrelevant and lagging that it must be discarded altogether. He proposed radical environments designed to address the leisure condition - an inhabitable city floating on structures high above our existing built environments composed of architecture that stimulated the senses. Constant would attempt to address through architecture the inherent, inextinguishable human needs inadvertently forfeited in this new society (Constant 2001). Constant fully understood the reciprocal nature of the architecture-to-culture relationship.



figure 7.1 Constant's New Babylon - the leisure city (Constant 2001)

In conclusion, as stated in the abstract, the overlying goal of this thesis is to analyze the built environment as an embodiment of cultural paradigms from the Renaissance to today to demonstrate the frameworks that will shape social spaces in architecture in the future. An early understanding of that future gives architecture an opportunity to not only intimate, describe, and concretize emerging collective thought, but to understand the reasons by which architecture of past paradigms became institutionalized in the current milieu. Approaching

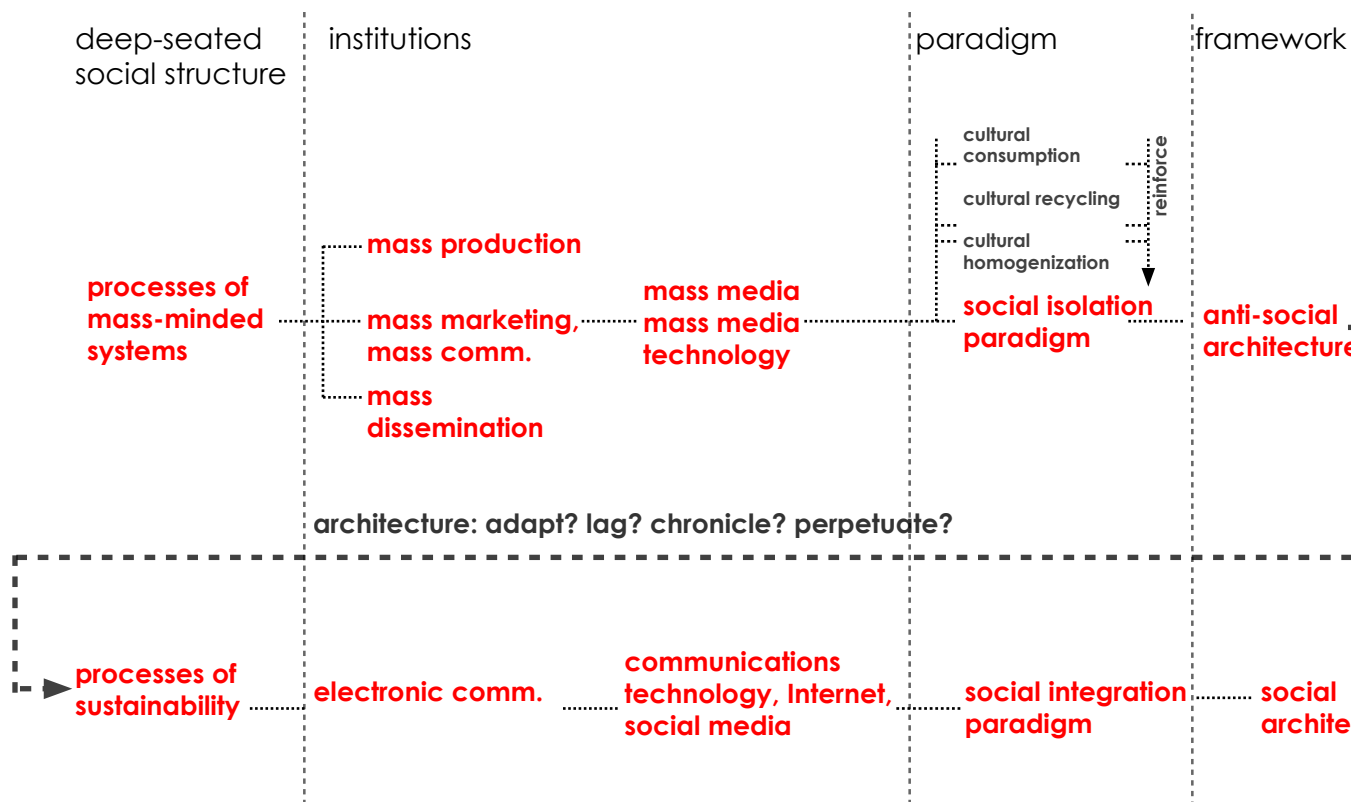


figure 7.2 Summary diagram of the periodic development of two frameworks of contrasting social architecture

architectural design armed with this knowledge will allow architects to better anticipate a framework of adaptability that must be inherent in alterations made to the built environment. Furthermore, as designers who could potentially conceive of work that lasts for generations to come, it is essential to understand the underlying institutional framework guiding the design, the incentive for the project, and the potential collective impact of the building, sustainably speaking or otherwise, in the future. When we ask if a building is truly necessary - if it symbolizes a cultural narrative worth embodying, if it is within our capacity to appropriately address the locality of its context, if it employs sensitivity to the inextinguishable human needs of sociability - we begin to approach both genuine *architecture* and *sustainability*.

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7.2.0 Final Thoughts

Throughout this thesis, several comparisons have been drawn between everyday buildings and monumental architecture around the world - but particularly in Europe. This is not to be skewed as a propositional ideal that all buildings are to be compared to the Pantheon. More so, because of the preservation of such architecture we can extrapolate ideas on architectural sociability from its contextual relationship to its culture over time, applying them to restore the fundamental human qualities of architecture the American city forfeited at its onset (but is regaining). Nor is this to be taken as a call to adopt the European-style in place of American vernacular or an attempt to sieve inborn American culture through a framework of European values, as a reduction or removal of domestic character would be antithetical to the purpose of this thesis. The purpose is to take what the existing cultural manifestation of our cities and offer a strategy for progressing it, improving it, not of an elitist derision of the American city's condition but from a desire to see it further prosper - to do the best we can with what we have. If anything this thesis poses is a rejection to the monotony of the international style for a renewal of the domestic American vernacular, which would serve only as a vehicle for healthier sociability and sustainability in our built spaces. As Frank Lloyd Wright once said: *"A free America, democratic in the sense that our forefathers intended it to be, means just this: individual freedom for all, rich or poor, or else this system of government we call democracy is only an expedient to enslave man to the machine and make him like it"* (All-Wright 2011).

Furthermore, the case study social-media architecture of the Open Aid Center, for its symbolic value of new technology and a new building typology, becomes a relatively aggrandized example of the social integration paradigm as the underlying framework for an architecture.

And so it is important to point out that *social architecture* does not have to be constrained to the public or the urban, but can and should permeate into private buildings such as the family home. It doesn't require explicit connection to social media through hi-tech facades and materials, but like the Pantheon describes, more importantly than this is that the sociability becomes inherent in quality, designed spaces. I would argue that the individual dwelling becomes the most important component of architecture for the social integration paradigm to imbue as a bottom-up approach to sustainable living. The same can be said and emphasized for dense residential urban spaces. As city populations grow, it becomes all the more important for this typology to be conscious of the social consequences of elevating communities off of the interactive setting of the ground plane. Provisions of public space, atria of circulation spaces that are supplemented with open areas suitable for engaging with neighbors, will be fundamental to the social quality of these buildings. For the individual dwelling it begins with less square footage to make the entirety of the house more intimate. Even the projected decline of the average of American home to under two thousand square feet is still very large for the average family of less than three people. The home should grow only as the family grows, and even private spaces might be reconsidered for becoming shared private spaces. Values of autonomy, apportioning, and collective sharing must be weighed before deciding if it is necessary to have individual bedrooms, bathrooms, closets, offices etc. Houses designed around the social spaces of the kitchen and living room foster interaction, opportunities for ritual and tradition, and a feeling of domestic community. A limitation of mass media technology in these spaces is intrinsic - if there is to be a television, it should be kept to only one in the house so that engagement with it can

become a social activity. As illustrated by the discussion of planned communities in chapter four, the siting of the individual dwelling is must be equally considered with the design of its space. The positive effects of a connection to nature are undervalued, but fakery of this setting in planned communities provides only a counterfeit illusion of nature's essential indispensability of inspiring, unrehearsed habitation. Struck in balance with access to the diversity and spontaneity of urban life creates a dynamic environment in which to situate a prosperous social dwelling.

And so I approach this section of concluding thoughts as both a clarification of potential misinterpretations of the points I attempted to make in the thesis and a submission of personal insight of the more practical and accessible purposes of this research. if anything is to be gleaned from this investigation it is to convey that *we are what we build*, to a degree *we become what we inhabit*. The frameworks for institutionalized behavior run deep, and this includes the built environment. Although in the end, I do think it is *the people* that make *the place*, quality of space will always have a direct relationship to quality of life.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

HARMONIZING HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS

social media, community, and the necessity of social presence

THESIS SUMMARY

- + initial researched theory:**
Social media such as Facebook and Twitter is replacing social presence (face-to-face interaction) as the primary means for human interaction.
- + second researched theory:**
By replacing social presence, social media is de-emphasizing architecture as the primary infrastructure for social interaction.
- + first conceptual question:**
As social media continues to grow, is public space being marginalized?
- + third researched theory:**
Some purposes of social media and social presence are mutually exclusive. Because of rituals and activities that are directly effected by the characteristics of the tangible environment such as climate, quality of space, sense of place, and our basic emotional and psychological need for physical relations, People have an inherent need for face-to-face interaction that cannot be replaced by social media.
- + second conceptual question:**
If people have an inherent need for face-to-face interaction, does this imply an inherent need for architecture, as well?
- + third conceptual question:**
If people have an innate need for architecture as social space, what do these spaces become when they must foster communities formed in both social presence and social media?
- + conclusions:**
As cultures move further in to the digital age, there must be a paradigm shift in the way public space and civic architecture is designed. These spaces must reflect the influences of new technologies and society's engrossment in the non-space interactions of social media to remain a relevant context for human interaction and community development. Architecture must embrace that social interaction does not always require physical proximity by using social media as an organizational resource for bringing people and a social component back to public space.

Open
aid
network

adam john longenbach
architecture graduate student
the pennsylvania state university
adviser: darla v. lindberg
2010

THESIS CASE STUDY:

In consideration of the outlined theory, this thesis investigates how the efforts of over 1.8 million non-government organizations can be harmonized through social media and social presence to reduce redundancies in aid delivery as outlined by the Millennium Development Goals.¹ As evidenced in the response to recent natural disasters in Haiti and Chile, technology and social media are playing an increasingly greater role in the way aid is organized and implemented. Within nine days of the Haitian earthquake, Americans donated over twenty-six million dollars to the Red Cross through ten-dollar text message donations. Using technology and social media to generate awareness, the American Red Cross created the largest grossing non-profit fundraising campaign effort to date.² Society's use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter as an informational resource is growing exponentially at a rate of about 20% annually, yet its potential to contribute as an essential resource to non-profit work largely remains unrealized.³

For this thesis, harmonization begins with the proposition of a social networking site this project has deemed the Open Aid Network. The Open Aid Network would allow humanitarian groups to connect more effectively with volunteers, advocates, donors, and those in need of services. The site would be an organizational resource for aligning aid delivery to disaster areas as large as the aforementioned earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, to helping an elderly person get in touch with the local Key Club because he or she needs help with daily tasks. In this way, the social network is not another humanitarian organization itself, but acts as an extension of all humanitarian organizations for their benefit.

However, would social media and the Open Aid Network alone be enough to harmonize humanitarian efforts? Our inherent need for social presence suggests that opportunities for face-to-face interaction would also be necessary. This necessity of social presence is evident in the organization of the social networking site of Facebook or the Internet Search engine of Google, which require substantial space not only to maintain their web-based functions, but to remain innovative in their industry through face-to-face collaboration and think tanking, also. The Open Aid Network would require comparable space for administration, maintenance, etc., which, like Facebook and Google, could all be funded by advertisements on the social networking website itself. Likewise, the architecture can go beyond providing these basic administrative needs by creating spaces and opportunities for social presence and collaboration among humanitarian organizations, fundraising events, protest/rally spaces for public discourse, and serving as an amenity to its surrounding neighborhood. The building, the Open Aid Center, provides opportunities for non-government organizations to raise public awareness in an experiential, tangible way, as the architecture allows the public to make donations while seeing what donations fund, to consider volunteering while seeing others volunteer, or to learn about humanitarian efforts while seeing the efforts being made.

The thesis becomes a case study for how future architecture and public spaces may be designed as translations of physical space from digital "non-spaces" through advances in media technology. The Open Aid Center is public architecture that fosters relationships formed through social media and social presence to become a tangible symbol for global humanitarian efforts and civic architecture in the digital age.

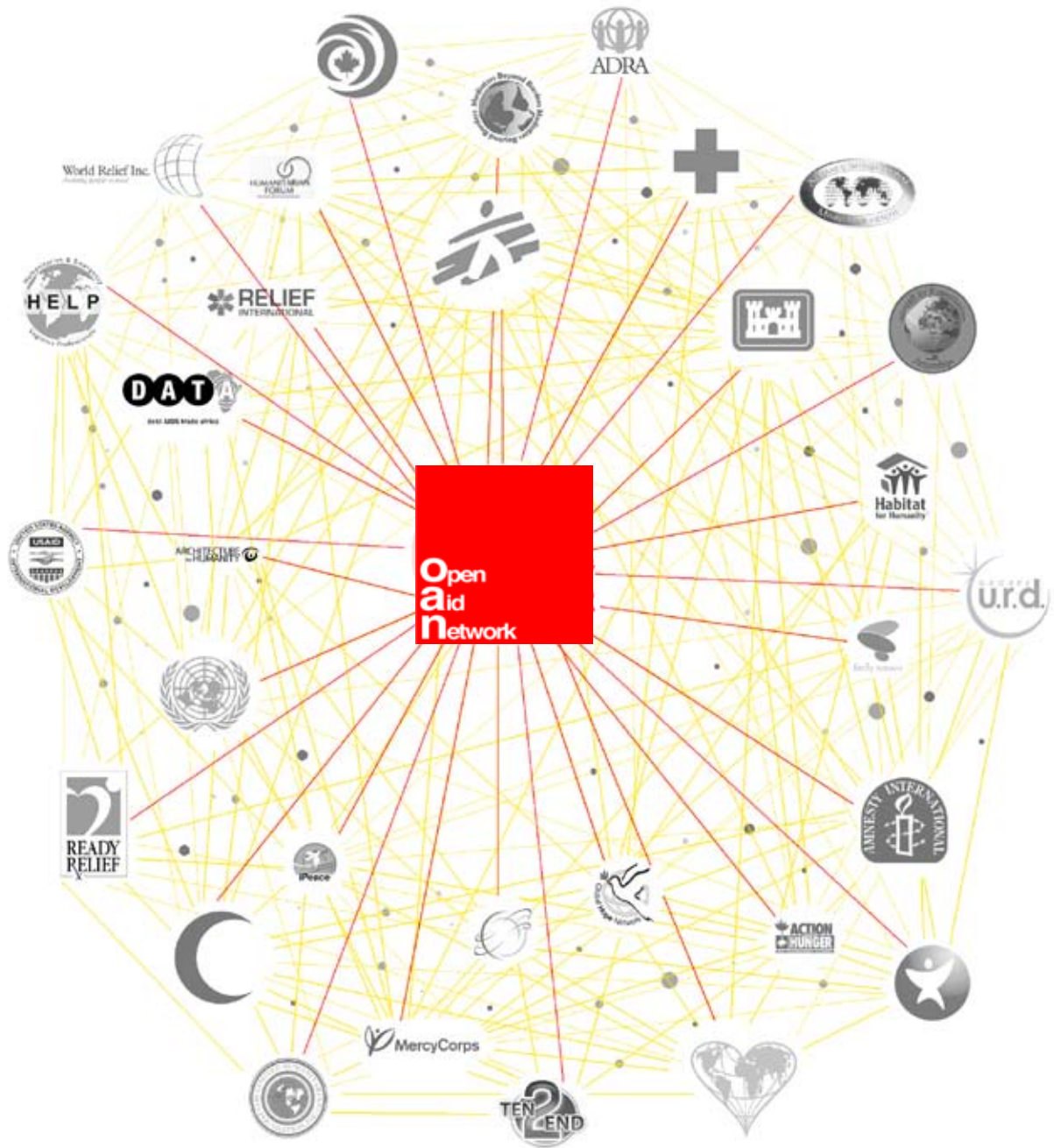
¹ MDG Task Force. Millennium Development Goals. 2000.

² Mobile commons and mGive. 2010 nonprofit text messaging benchmarks. www.e-benchmarkstudy.com/mobile. 2010.

³ Facebook Factsheet. <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?factsheet>. 2010.

Appendix A synopsis for the original case study investigation of the cultural role of social media and its potential impact on architecture

Appendix B



Appendix B Graphic representation of the Open Aid Network as a social connector of over 1.8 million humanitarian organizations

Appendix C



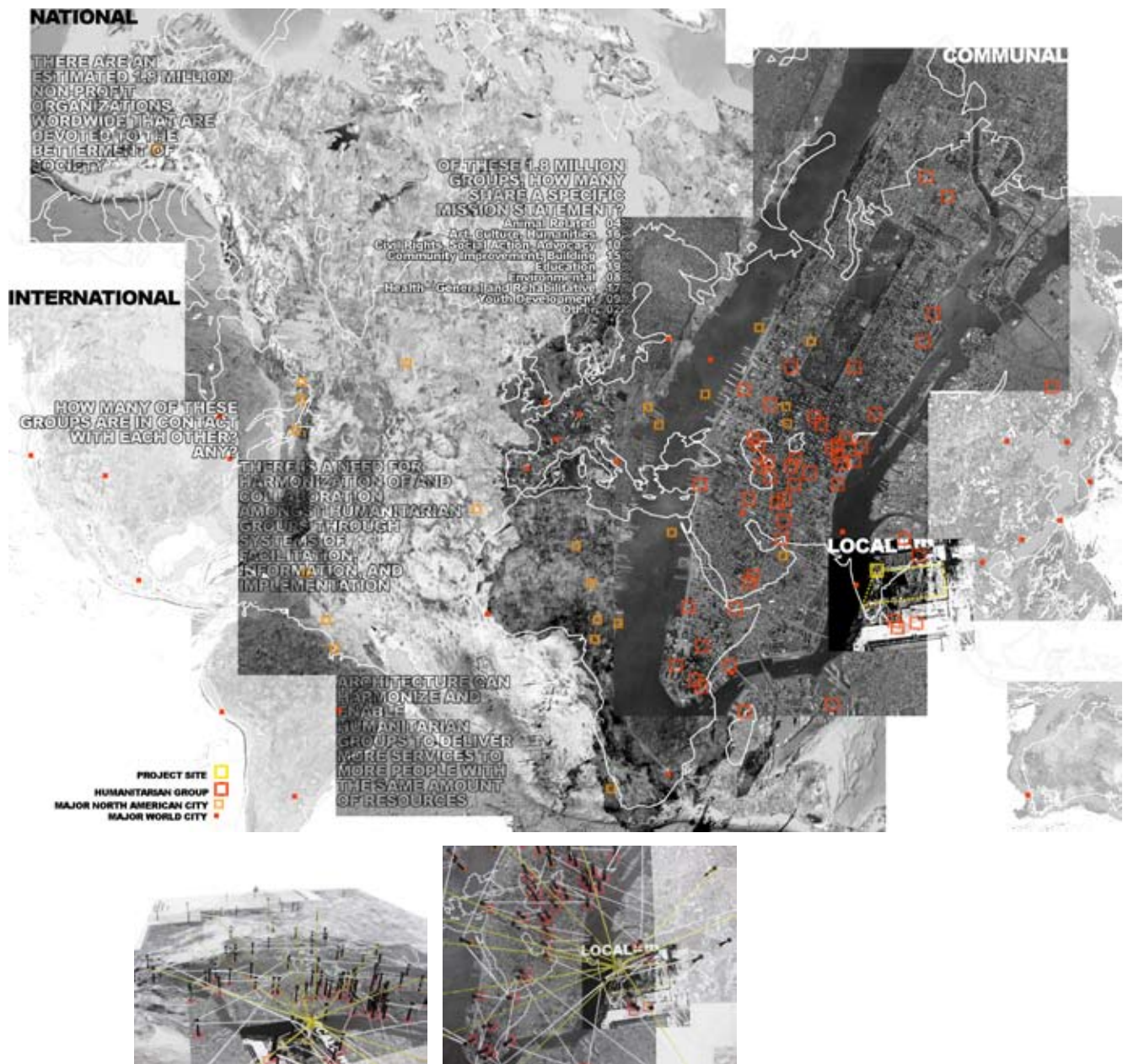
Appendix C The relationship of social media and social presence as a means to harmonizing and reducing redundancies in humanitarian efforts

Appendix D



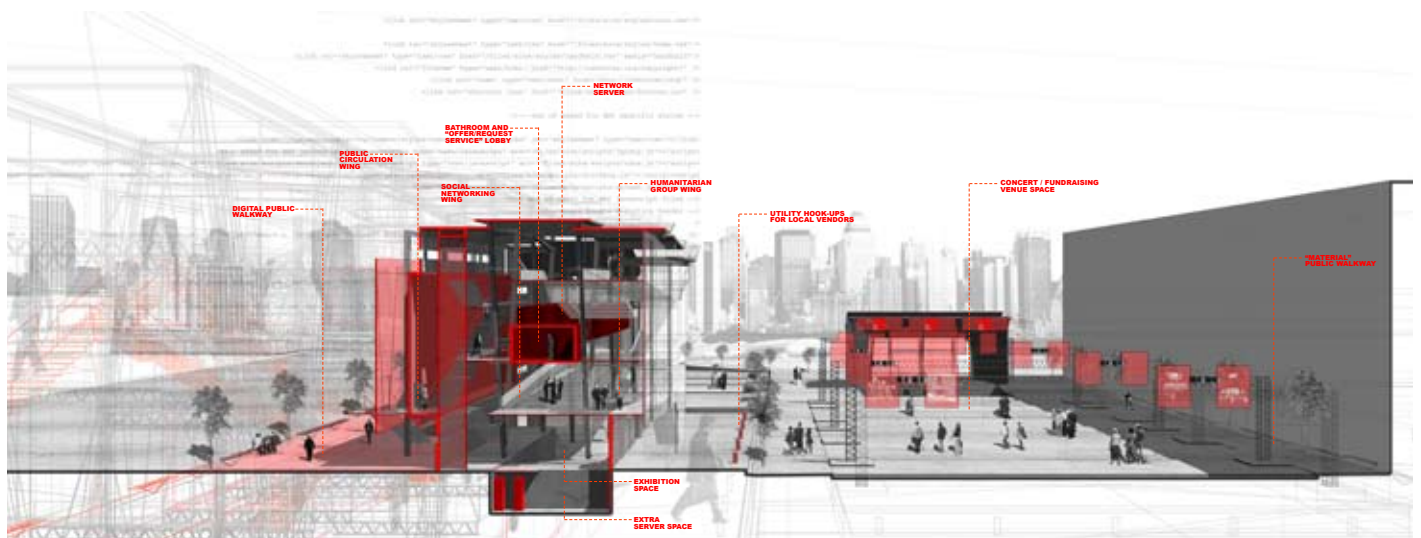
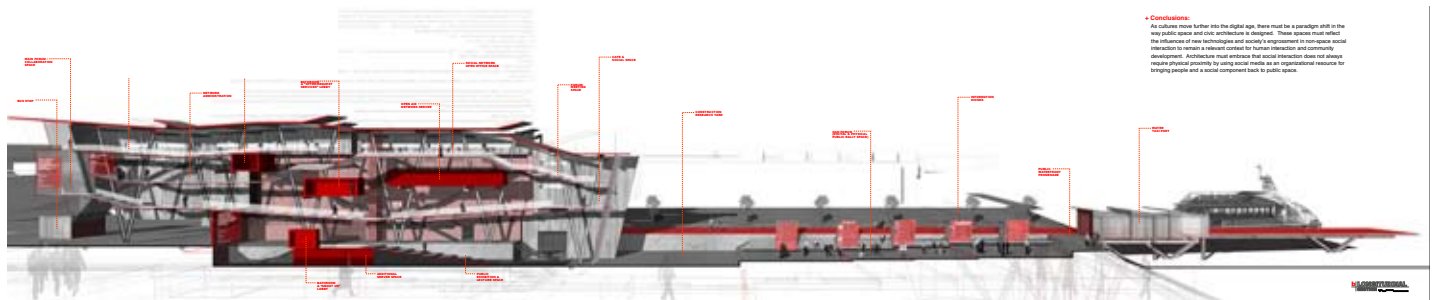
Appendix D Aerial photos of the building site in Greenpoint, Brooklyn - an old industrial site on the East River across from the United Nations complex. The industrial building shown in the images was razed in 2007 (Google Earth 2009).

Appendix E



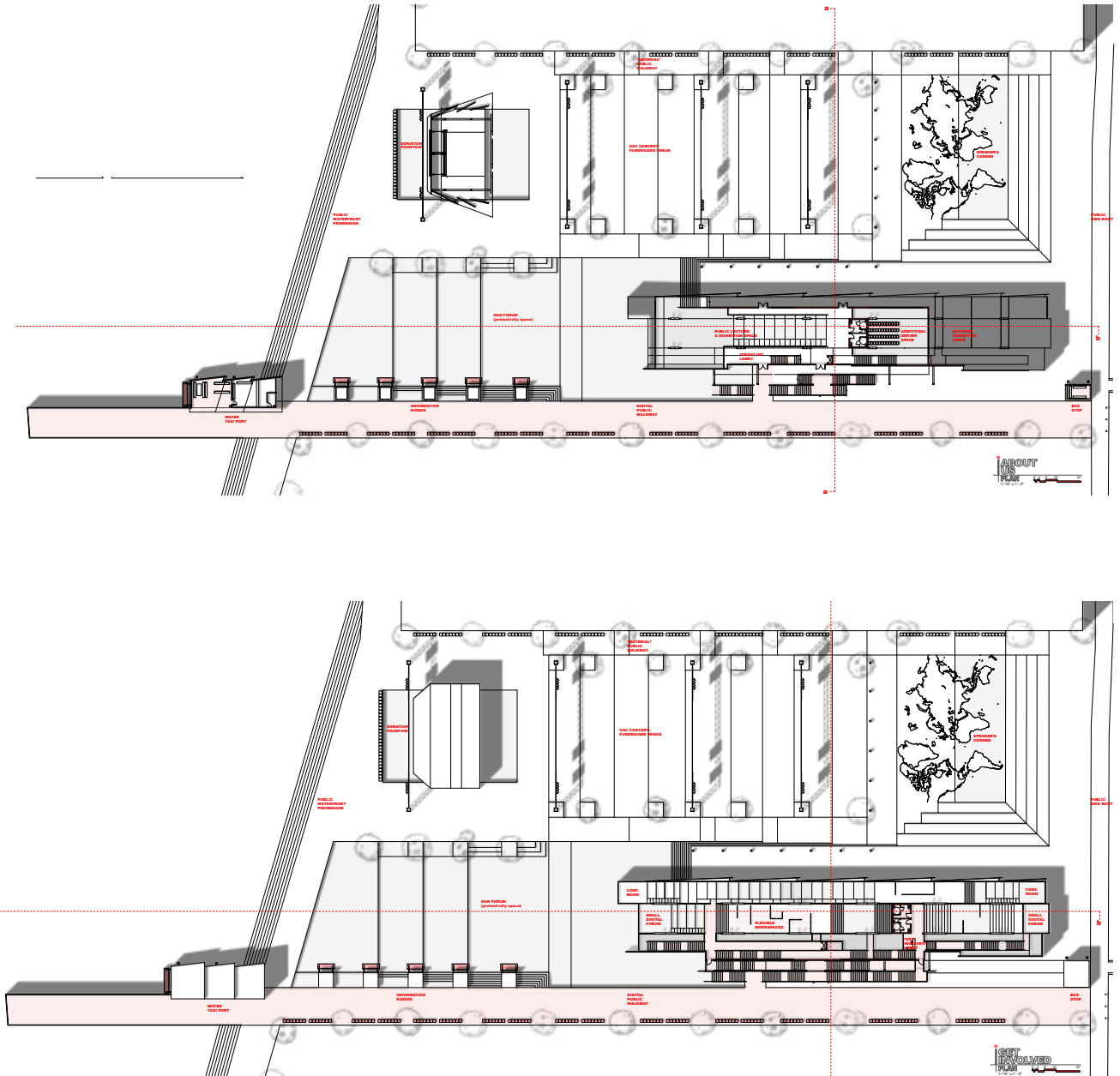
Appendix E Site plan and model documenting the network of humanitarian organizations and major international cities across the scale of the local, urban, national, and international.

Appendix F



Appendix F Longitudinal and transverse section through the Open Aid Center showing the complexity of sequenced social spaces analogous to the ambient awareness social media provides

Appendix G



Appendix G Floor plans of the Open Aid Center show an intent to create a hierarchical sequence of inter-related and interconnected social spaces for social interaction and discourse