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PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPHERES IN HYPERMEDIATIC AND CONSUMERIST SOCIETIES

Abstract. In this presentation we discuss the definition of public and private spaces in hypermediatic societies, which are under the huge impact of mediatization. On the one hand, we see the erosion and invasion of private spaces by the large range of virtualities of the available media; on the other, we see a pervasive permeation of public spaces, which are losing dignity and functionality. Paradoxically, our consumerist and hypermediatic societies are, in parallel, contributing to the constraint of private spaces.

Why are our living rooms dominated by TV shows? Why do so many websites seem to instantly know our preferences? Why are our streets colonized by advertizing billboards and neon signs? Why do we see Malls replacing public gardens that progressively degrade or simply disappear? Why do these Malls have private security while public spaces are more and more feared for their insecurity?

These functional alterations of spaces, public and private, challenge us to consider the pros and cons of each mutation and to question whether they serve our values of democracy and citizenship, as well as the essential balance between individual and collective interests.

Finally, we stress that this phenomenon poses a challenge to education that must be tackled if we want to regain these spaces and know how to use them freely.

Keywords: Public, private spaces, mass media, consumerism

1. THE "MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE"

Our society is marked in its organization, functioning and development by media, as indeed all were. But in our opinion, the diversity and power of these contemporary media is blunt, which means they become the real "massage" (McLuhan & Fiore, 1971; McLuhan, 1979), the environment, more or less polluted, of our consumerist age (Kilbourne, 2000).

As Cross (2002) stresses, from the mid-eighteenth century we witnessed a dynamic by which a new medium appears, at about, every twenty-five years but with an increasing pace: 1850-daily press; 1875-wired telephone; 1900-hertzian waves and Cinema; 1925-Radio; 1950-TV and mobile phone; 1965-Satellite TV and Personal computer; 1995-Web TV & Tablet; 2002 Social networks (Friendster...). After appearing, these means start by winning a certain prominence but in a second stage they enter in such a competition that tends to integrate them in a complex and dynamic system, which combines and functionalizes each one of them with a somehow assigned specific task, although always in conjunction with each other. For instance, mass media industries, the Press, Cinema, Radio and TV evolved with some independence until 1975, but after that date, they start developing in complementarity.

In our society, media activity is such and its penetration in the different social dimensions so deep that we can say a "mediatic society" has emerged (Riou, 2005), from which derives a mass media culture. This cultural form is the result of the combined activity of many industries and media, where television still appears as the dominant medium. One should bear in mind that, for instance, children live nowadays an intense involvement with the general electronic media: television, the Internet, computer games and consoles, movies and all sort of videos from different sources... The media are now the primary leisure activity and the main source of information, thus constituting "the heart of the political and cultural life of modern societies" (Morduchowicz, 2003, 35), having enormous power to determine how we perceive and understand reality. In fact, in this regard Morduchowicz (2003, 43) wrote that:

"Media images organize and order our world view and our deepest values: what is good and bad, what is positive and what is negative, what is moral and what is amoral, or even immoral. Media show us how to behave in given social situations; propose us what to think, to feel, to believe, and what to fear. Teach us what a man and a woman should be, how should we dress, how to consume, how to be popular and avoid failure, how to react to different social

groups and how to answer regarding certain norms, institutions and social values.”

In fact, it happens that media culture, emerging in the thirties, has become omnipresent at the beginning of XXI century and affects our life in a magnitude still to ascertain regarding its full range of implications.

The basis for facing the challenges that such a reality confronts us with could be found in the recognition that, in the last seventy years, media have radically transformed “our modes of existence” (Cruz, 2002, 19). And this not only because media have been applied to production modes, but also because their ubiquity has profoundly altered our everyday lives. A particular consequence of the intervention of the media was that, combining with other factors, they come to determine a reconfiguration of the private and the public spaces or spheres. So opening up a new scope, or at least a new priority, requiring, in particular, a reflection taken from the educational field.

2. COLONIZATION AND EROSION OF PRIVATE SPHERE

Media coverage that crosses our societies presents duplicity of opportunities and threats. In fact, such duplicity is extensive to all things that cross our lives and we have to live with it. As Aldous Huxley (1994, 202) pointed out “every discovery in pure science is potentially subversive.” The question is how to cope with the duplicity of risks and rewards that each new human creation brings about.

Let us first consider a form of invasion of privacy to which we are a little asleep, as to the point of that sometimes we don't recognize it. We all can see that television enters through a very natural way into our homes. Someone said it is an open window to the world, but what remains to be said is that it is also a door to get inside every home. We must ask ourselves what it brings, what does it convey and what does it change when it enters our homes.

TV infiltrates a lot that, if we made a serious analysis, we would not want to let in and it changes our daily lives in a way that, if we considered it critically, also would not be willing to accept. In fact, television consistently penetrates family relationships, promoting spontaneously –by harnessing the climate of intimate affection– styles of doubtful life, consumerism, passivity and blind acceptance. Moreover, since there is not a thoughtful and structured response from families upon exposure to television, it is with much ease that TV adjusts family meals schedule, proposes certain activities over others and brings together family members to its pleasure although usurping their relationships, communication and emotional life (Quintas, 2000). Due to its penetration there is no dialogue, nor do people share

projects and problems. As was well noted by Popper & Condry (1995), television exerts its influence through two factors: time and content. It steals the first and hucksters the second. Television appears to us today as a tremendous power capable of instilling doubtful values and hijacking time that could and should be devoted to more important things. However, as Lazar (1980) noticed, rather than blaming television we must ask ourselves whether we have other more productive alternative leisure options; we must ask ourselves why do we accept our privacy absorption in its regime, what do we lose with this and what can we do to change it.

Recent studies show children spend about 40 hours a week watching TV and video games. Because of this they read less, play less and develop obesity (DECO 2005). One consequence that could be strongly ascribed to advertising of saturated salt and sugar products, which are especially directed to programming niches sought by children. A solution to address such a problem would be to monitor and manage exposure to television (Matos, 2002). An alternative that implies choosing programs carefully and that we assign children's leisure time to other options, meaning this that one closes the “door”, or if you want the “box” that, as it was said, changed the world.

But there are other areas where media allow the invasion of privacy. The Internet, for example, also contains a certain duplicity that must be considered. On the one hand it could be taken as an ocean of potentially useful information and, on the other hand, it could be seen as the ever existing greatest trash dump. Both serving to the continuous and almost instant self-monitoring of financial networks (Castells, 1997), as to the installation of a global control network (Amalou, 2001); both serving to bring us as close to each other, as to shut us in the most individualistic cocoon; both serving to promote free expression, as in the case of Blogs, as the pandemic of falsehood or even normalization, when we see that the medium becomes more and more delivered to moneyed interests and customized marketing strategies (Ramonet, 2007); both serving to enrich ourselves by interacting with each other as to invade our quiet moments. Consider for this matter the abundant news about hackers that peep and expose personal intimacy through web cams that too many young people incautiously use daily.

Internet made of the sale of everyday life intimacy a big fat deal. This trend, that television also tends to explore, poses the problem of the cumulative effect of devaluing intimacy and privacy in the eyes of those who became accustomed to see them exposed. And what about the persecution one can suffer under the new Internet browsing follow up techniques? A chase that serves to meet our cravings and refine advertising that could be addressed

to us. Few will realize, however, the real meaning of the common technique, apparently innocuous, that requests a response to a questionnaire which typifies the user as a condition to access the sites with potential personal interesting themes.

Let us consider a subject that has gained notoriety, due to the concerns it has raised worldwide, and recently reached Portugal. According to news from January 29, 2007, obtained from the Portuguese Government Portal, the Ministry of Education signed, through the General Directorate for Innovation and Curriculum Development (DGIDC), with the National Commission for Data Protection (NCDP), a protocol collaboration aimed at including the protection of personal data between school subjects at different levels of education, particularly in the discipline of civic education. The protocol was made public during the 1st European Data Protection Day, established by the European Council, which was celebrated on 28 January 2007. According to *Diário Digital*, the same commission will now launch a campaign in primary schools which advises students not to disclose personal data on the Internet. In particular, this initiative intends to warn against the dangers of chats and sites where one could share videos and personal data. Such measures were motivated, as reported by Correio da Manhã (2007), after a few cases of companies that illegally obtained data about students through schools. In addition to this, a questionnaire study, which aimed to investigate family violence, also prompted much controversy since it asked younger pupils for very intimate information. But these cases are only the tip of the iceberg of what might be happening throughout the world.

According to Amalou (2001), privacy espionage it is nowadays very well installed within marketing companies. Currently various companies are actively engaged in the production and sale of comprehensive and detailed databases: Consodata, Claritas, DCI, Metromail. One source of this data has been in several countries the very own mails we receive and answer or follow up. Such technique can get a lot of information about our buying power, our interests, etc. But there are other very ingenious strategies to fish private information, such as the "inquiry-contest". Through this business arrangement to promote products, supposedly just by competing anyone can earn a pittance, while large companies gain detailed information that can be used by advertising and marketing. And there is indeed evidence that some companies sell that information acquired by the relationship they entail with their customers, without they are made aware or asked to approve it.

We also have news of some amazingly invasive practices from marketing and advertising agents. Under the pretext of completing schools' debili-

tated budget, marketing companies discover how to open up the door they lacked to enter this appetizing domain. In exchange for trifles, one VCR and a satellite dish was introduced in classrooms all over the United States. Under a multiyear contract, Channel One gained twelve minutes of television for a captive audience of pupils, with ads included (two minutes), which have to be transmitted within school hours and out of meals time. Another technique is to provide "educational materials" manufactured by brands, in some cases providing "kits" to address issues where the name and activity of big companies of carbonated beverages and cereals appears. In addition, we now see all sorts of advertisements displayed in schools, corridors, stairs, halls, pavilions, etc. In many countries, advertisements decorate floors of school's sports halls and major fast food chains are already in the canteens. We now have brand's day, in which activities are carried out involving brand's names and logos at the same time that educational portals financed by advertising become more and more popular.

In this respect, Juliet Schor (2004) gives us an account of the sophisticated techniques of "hunting" children and youth for consumerism, from which we can highlight "cool" espionage. Cool as what is "in", serves to define who is accepted, or not, just because one has pants or sneakers from a certain brand... The all set up is about consuming and conspicuously displaying products, which are always present as vehicles for expressing success and define personal identity. In "cool hunting" is very common to infiltrate within the groups well accepted individuals, specially hired due to their social roles, in order to do researches. A kind of practice that comes very close to the breach of trust.

In another hand, marketing has also turned to "viral communication". It is no longer just "product placement" that, for example, infiltrates brands in films; there is even the infiltration of events and the exploitation of personal friendships. One technique is to convene a party, where a product is introduced, in a laudatory manner, so that it becomes adopted by peers. All expenses paid by those who are interested in selling the product, of course. In general, brands use those individuals that stand out: the most admired and leaders. According to the above quoted author, we can even talk about an "ethnographic revolution" within marketing. Certain companies have hired professionals to conduct naturalistic observations, from morning to night, of the daily rituals of children and youth: the meals, the pranks, parties and even hygiene. That was how it was discovered that children play with packaging in the bath and so companies started to sell child care products that look like dolls or boats. As good consumers, parents authorized the filming for cash.

A practice that no longer surprises anyone is the

use of hidden cameras recordings. It seems to be easier to attract individuals to use them in return for a modest sum, even if it means the violation of another person's privacy and the risk of penalties for offenders. Indeed, in many shops it is increasingly common to have cameras to capture images of passersby, which we do not know if all resulting recordings are only used in accordance to security purposes.

But there is more, whether in schools or homes, several refined techniques to access personal privacy are already being applied, such as "brainstorming" and "focus groups". In general, it is sufficient that these practices have given consent from adults. However, it is doubtful that the subjects are completely aware of the purposes and consequences of these techniques, both for themselves and for their acquainted ones. Companies invest a lot of money hiring people who are exposed to ads and are subject to the reading of pupil's movements and/or to brain scan. Neuromarketing is in the house! Today it penetrates the innermost intimacy of people directly or indirectly. Benilde (2007) gives us an account of a vast industry of neuroscience applied to advertising. Several scientific discoveries are now providing access to brain analysis in order to guarantee sales effectiveness: we have entered the time of neuromarketing. In the USA, stands out the Brighthouse Institute, from advertiser's Joe Reyman, but on this side of the Atlantic there are also great strides to register. The French consulting agency PHD relies on a neuroplaning computer program associated to the technique of magnetic resonance to "reveal to brands the brain areas one must stimulate according to the objectives of their campaigns and the media used" (Benilde, 5, 2007). Even if all these practices have legal cover, it remains relevant that we raise the question about the ethical limits on the application of certain discoveries and technologies to access the most intimate realms of human beings: their unconscious.

It is likely that newspapers have been a determining propeller of the nineteenth century revolutions (Guzmán, 1989). Bringing and regularly taking news, they approximated private spaces and created public opinion movements, which changed the world. But it is also true that they have bring about reporters and photographers camera in hand, ready to spy the most hidden and sordid spaces of people's lives, being them more or less public, while taking very lightly individual privacy. Meanwhile, television fueled many expectations about the widespread of education to the masses, but also quickly entered the same regime of "spectacularization", where privacy tends to be a much sought after commodity.

There is no doubt that media companies are also spectacle companies, in them spectacle is the socially dominant model of life (Debord, 2000). Media potential for exposing and invading privacy

and intimacy capitalized by their own spectacularization the scopophilic drive that is humanly innate. At present we are watching a scopophilic explosion that articulates through media spectacle the exhibitionist and voyeuristic drives (Gubern, 2000). The desire of some to be exposed, to gain fame at any price, for any reason, even by getting personally degrading, appears accompanied by the desire to peek others, to penetrate what is private and intimate, and expected to remain as such. These correlative motivations made a spectacular industry. The only problem is that it turns out to be that we spectacularize what should be kept private for several reasons: sometimes because it supposes to drill a realm whose discretion is essential to the construction of personal identity, which is based on one's unity and interiority, and that by exposure corresponds to a disqualification; sometimes because it has no edifying value, but quite the opposite, degrades people.

As to television is concerned, Ramonet (2004) points out three stages for the evolution of above mentioned process, which has been pushing back the boundaries of what should be shown. Initially, before the eighties, access to media, particularly television, was conditioned by the fact one possesses important merits. In the next phase, which started in France in the eighties, the common citizen, with no particular merits, shall appear regularly on TV screens, especially in the context of the many contests that become very fashionable, whether as a competitor or as assistant public. In the third phase, Big Brother phase, we are witnessing a significant metamorphosis: it is no longer the question of ephemeral presences, but of becoming a character in a narrative woven between the real and the fictional, thus fully entering the spectacular world and indulging in it. The struggle for audiences, which represent proportional advertising incomes, has such a cost, requires the system to accelerate the production of celebrities and discards them at the same speed it took to create them: from day to night. It is clear that these celebrities are as ephemeral as precarious; the reason for their rise is similar to hot air balloons and reflects a comparable density in human terms. "Turbo-superstars" are also, in many cases, people willing to ensure fame at all costs, including scabrous exposure and inanities exhibitionism.

We now entered the time of intimacy sale to a media system perverted by uncontrolled exploitation of the scopophilic drive, claimed by the prevailing logic of spectacle. Currently media voracity is based on the exploitation of primary instincts: voyeurism, a certain sense of mastery, monitoring, control and paternalism; but also the correlatives exhibitionism, fame and submission. Everywhere intimacy is for sale. In "Jerry Springer Show" such exploitation entitles 15 minutes of fame, while series like "Sex and the City" or "Ally McBeal" take these drives as fundamental content. But it is not only on television that intimacy

is sold, on the Internet, in addition to everyday privacy, even death can be watched live. Tabloids and pink magazines, the so called "social press" generally cultivates the same (bad) taste.

It was in fact this marketing intimacy industry, this Bonfire of Vanities show business, which raised the current hunting occupation of paparazzi (Ramonet, 1999). Their function is to offer the average individual the pleasure of sharing the celebrities' joys and tragedies that are after all humanly universal. Such a vicarious experience seems to give an impression, in fact illusory, that we are equal, inhabit the same world, we have intimacy with them. But the result of this industry often falls back into the frame of wanton and impudence.

A daily Portuguese newspaper reported that Britney Spears was caught by photographers without interior and faint clothes after a night of fun. For a modest amount, one can find available on the internet videos of sexual acts from various superstars, caught unaware or betrayed by their companions. Many say that a paparazzi is to blame for the accident that killed Diana, Princess of Wales.

The business of indiscreet and unauthorized photographs is getting stronger even in Portugal. An article by Maria Lopes (2006), recently realized that private television channels and programs of Big Brother kind are pulled by certain interests, particularly the interest of "peeking", which is what feeds the demand for paparazzi content. It is estimated that this market will continue to grow prompting a tendency for television magazines increasingly become more about social *fait-divers* and vice versa: everything is social *fait-divers* and everything is television. Some say a picture can yield between 50 to 500 euros, but there are those who point to prices between 1000 and 5000 euros. According to someone who knows the craft, a good exclusive photograph of a blatant appetizing yield typically 500 euros. Considering the later refers to a "wizard apprentice" context, one can imagine what about Hollywood...

Such a circus is likely to accelerate, once today anyone can instantly become a supplier of such content. Currently it is possible to use an ordinary phone to photograph and film people's privacy at leisure places or at their homes without their consent. By the way, it should be take into account that was a mobile phone that filmed the hanging of Saddam Hussein, which in an evil hour indecently became a TV show.

3. COLONIZATION AND EROSION OF PUBLIC SPACE

We live in a media world, which means that media saturate our daily lives with ubiquitous and uninterrupted flow of messages whose criterion is to a massive part questionable. However we do not have

the time or sometimes the ability to question or to dodge his snare. So that, as shown by Kilbourne (2000), we have to live in an environment intoxicated by messages that do not solicit, by stimuli that do not seek, and whose value would end up criticizing is, in fact, we considered the most attention.

For post-industrial societies *Megalopolis* there is no longer even a reason for admiration, because we no longer have any comparison term. We were not accustomed to silence and unclouded landscape of open fields. In our world of media intervention is intense and constant, since awakening to bedtime it is everywhere, outside and indoors. On the streets, in transports, buildings, schools, almost everywhere we are confronted with posters, neons and screens. It is clear, for example, that fashionable music seized the streets and various public spaces. Even in clinics waiting rooms it has been deemed desirable to have some music background, such as in supermarkets and shopping centers, where it is used to speed up or slow down the pace of the customers according to their influx. And yet a closer look will reveal that, in various public spaces, there are surveillance cameras: in ATMs, at petrol pumps and shops, etc. Meanwhile, awareness of such prevalence may grow among the inhabitants of this hypermediatic world a sense of "panopticism", which is, as shown by Michel Foucault (1995), a very powerful way of getting self-conditioning attitudes and behaviors. Who lives under the impression of being constantly observed tends to adopt a socially desirable formatted behavior, abdicating of spontaneity. "Panopticism" is an excellent means of shaping behavior by established standards.

If, as it seems evident, media intrusion in our lives is due to the extraordinary development of technological media, the fact is that it has a powerful symbiont: advertising. In fact, media invasion of public space stems largely from the need of advertising to get farther and farther away, i.e., closer to us, more within our existence.

Firstly, we have to notice the invasion of media space for advertising, which derives in fact from its delivery to the logic that did triumph everywhere, the principle of spectacle and entertainment. As Riou (2004) has shown –in this new framework of fragmentation, saturation and skepticism –, advertising eventually abandoned product anchorage, to rely increasingly in entertainment's world, looking to integrate it – in its own right – and to participate in its acceleration. The strategy of advertising is to sell the "hyperreal" in order to induce consumers to buy the real, thus constituting with the media system, which feeds mass culture, a process of reciprocal feedback: film, television, music, fashion, sport, gadgets, games video and, of course, advertising that has filtered itself into each of any available medium. Advertising, representing nowadays diverse indus-

tries – from automotive to food and fashion– forms with media networks and entertainment an interdependent and coordinated circuit. The element that unites them all is the spectacle of consumption, which means submission to consumerism, or the spectacle of consumption/bmission (Brune, 2004). With this, advertising has entered the stage of “full branding”, under the pretext of sponsoring and the cover of a philanthropic façade, advertising invaded our culture, while assimilating it and projecting into it the images and ideas that serve to convey the “personality” of brands.

Secondly, it seems therefore necessary to consider advertising invasion of public and cultural space, that “full branding” extends by applying its logic to urban landscapes, to art, to movies, to collective events, the Malls, sport events and schools (Klein, 2000). Through this scheme, advertising gets in fact farther, or closer to the lives of its publics, more than just a conveyed representation it can make of brand’s identity configurative associations a lived reality. More than a culture support it seeks to become culture itself – to merge with it. Nowadays, advertising has pass simple public recognition or tax exemption, currently the task is to create social and cultural events of a brand, of course. So it has become increasingly common that advertising colonizes the organization of music festivals, sports events, exhibitions and competitions in various cultural fields, as well as many other events, which no longer appear just under the sponsorship of a brand but as tag events.

Its voracity seems to have no limits and ultimately has been reflected in the physical space of our cities. A case, apparently trivial, is the episode where Yves Saint-Laurent said to be willing to subsidize Regent Street Christmas’ decorations, in return for having the brand’s logo all over it. Of the same caliber is the invasion where a soft drink brand decided to appropriate a renowned water jet from an urban park.

Much more significant, however, is the celebrated Michael Chesney case. This hip-hop publicist loved the busy Queen Street West, Toronto, much valued as commercial space and of artistic, political and cultural expression. So he started decorating all buildings with huge ads, until in 1996 he campaigned for Levi’s and covered the entire façades from almost every sector of the busiest street. The result was a huge disappointment for the people, who personally manifested against, but also for Chesney who himself could not recognize his lovely street anymore. In both cases one sees well established how advertising invades public space and redefines urban landscapes.¹

¹ However the destruction that consumerism is imposing to our beautiful urban centres can be motivated either by their invasion either by desertification derived from the displacement of commercial bustle to large surfaces.

We do not know how Chesney came up with the idea of covering the buildings, but already in 1982 the movie *Blade Runner*, directed by Ridley Scott, showed a futuristic city with buildings covered by giant screens that constantly passed advertisements.

Is this what the future holds? Well, future is already today, because technological advances, in the meantime, provided the spread of this type of electronic façades, a little everywhere. LED technology, for example, has the necessary flexibility to cover large surfaces of buildings with huge big screens resolution and low consumption. Some of these panels can even be transparent, not preventing the passage of light.

The contrast is striking between our reality invaded by advertising and other times, when the buildings and the streets had not yet support this impact, on the contrary, today we have many opportunities to verify the difference because, as noted above, we lack a comparison point.

In France, the so called group “Les Déboulonneurs” propose to motivate non-violent civil disobedience on a periodic basis by carrying out various paint covering actions of considered invasive ads. As they say it is necessary to place advertising in its place, remove it without necessarily destroying its prestige, i.e., assigning to ads the role of instruments of information to all human service activities². A major objective of this movement is to limit the size and density of advertising devices that invade the streets and landscapes.³

4. PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPACE DISQUALIFICATION

As we have seen, private and public spaces not only have a physical dimension, also represent a social dimension, i.e., they are psychological, relational and cultural domains. Lately has been we watch, due to various reasons, a shrinking in private space and a devaluation of the symbolic and physical public space which we should to be investigated here.

We live in a paradoxical world, where we see emerging solidarity movements alongside with the growing indifference to the suffering people right beside us. If our time has given expression to various humanitarian initiatives, whose concern is our neighbor, more or less close to us, the truth is that another orientation also seems to be typical of our day: the extreme individualism and narcissism,

² To redefine advertising, the group proposes to expunge it from the embarrassing and invasive procedures: the monopoly of public space, the parasitization of cultural events and media, the promotion of consumerism and human disqualification.

³ The movement advocates the limitation of the posters format within 50x70 cm and of two square meters for advertising devices, besides limiting it to a reasonably density accordingly to number of inhabitants.

serving both of basis for a recalcitrant hedonism. As a Pieiller (2007) has stressed, this axiology is voting today people to a supposedly self-sufficient freedom and the frantic search for self-realization. There should be no surprise than, it is now being considered that, by itself, all these factors have led to a certain shrinkage in the private space, with obvious devaluation of public affairs, as those of community ground, or the ones of the most basic humanitarian nature. The big problem is that this individualistic orientation seems refractory to the understanding that free development of each and every person cannot be disconnected. The current triumph of radicalized individualism seems to shut down individuals in a "narcissistic bubble", in which the forgetting of the "common thing" is inevitable.

But beyond the postmodern axiological mutation in the sense of individualism, we must consider the impact of technological developments, including those from the mediatic realm, which, according to Gubern (2000) has brought about the paradoxical coexistence between personalized demasification and anonymizing massification, besides given a new expression to the tension between the tension between the atavistic claustrophobic/claustrophilic, agoraphobic/agoraphilic tendencies.

In line with the intensification of individualism and narcissism that have shut down the collective sense, the recent automated, electronic and telematic home appeared to serve cocooned users, ostracized in an idealized self-sufficiency, sedentary and willing to idleness claustrophilia, passing exactly through the possibilities offered by new media and their regime. It is the affirmation of the "post-industrial homecentrism", which comes to ensure a "narcissistic territoriality protected by electronic media (alarms, electrified grids, photocells, infrared rays), just because this privacy society lives under the anxiety caused by the threat of human encroachment (thieves, kidnappers of children) or technology (microphones, telephoto lenses, etc.). A context that comes to reinforce the desire to erect true self-sufficient armored bunkers, converted in airtight cells for commercial, ideological and cultural consumption" (Gubern, 2000, 157).

The emergence of this reality, however, featured a decisive economic factor, which was the possibility of private ownership of hardware and software tools from communication and entertainment industries. As above referred, we watch to the systematically developing of new media, the telephone, radio, the record player and tape recorder, television, video, and more recently the DVD, without forgetting the personal computer, with its powerful gaming industry and Internet access. Along with books – the first private individual and cultural tool – all these technologies are also privatized cultural technologies, geared to individualized and

private use, therefore serving as an "individualistic counterpoint to the communitarian and agoraphilic culture from theaters, circuses, stadiums, concert halls and cinemas, which bring together in a room large crowds to simultaneously enjoy from the same show" (Gubern 2000, 158).

However, the initial prestige granted by private ownership of the new devices has blurred because of its very democratization, required by the necessity of extending sales to individual consumers, much more profitable than the collective enjoyment.⁴ In this new media framework, idleness consumption of certain cultural property no longer requires one has to leave home and risk going through an unknown urban locus, moreover when it come to be one increasingly marked by insecurity, pollution and danger. The self-sufficient domestic claustrophilia is negatively correlated to agorophobia, fear, aversion and abandonment of public space and its framework of conviviality. At its center now rises the luxury fortress of the postindustrial home, expression of social narcissism and a desocialization factor, which is inextricably linked to technological cultural industries. In fact, after them, since the twentieth century, we are witnessing a hypertrophy of one of the functionally complementary ancestors and normal trends, once new technologies of communication and entertainment, focusing in private and domestic use, tend to assert claustrophilia and agorophobia, thus inducing a departure from the outside world, the social and the natural. New lifestyles have, however, brought about a necessary compensation. But concern remains about the prevalence of a form of entertainment that purges the physical and emotional closeness, which tends to replace the sensory and affective communication for television screens and computer mediation, once their expansion sharpens certain negative trends: transformation of society into a desert full of people; detachment from issues relating to the common good; and the triumph of interface mediated culture that assumes a severe sensory-affective mutilation.

What can we say, for example, about the growing number of people who prefer "online sex" and do not have or will not have time to search for the actual physical relationship? And can we accept that a growing percentage of people do not vote for crucial elections? The media frame itself also has, as it is well known, broad responsibility in the latter problem, once the triumph of spectacularization media reigning frame installed a regime of skepticism, demotivation and growing disillusionment about politics. Increasingly people move away from political and public spheres because "mise en scène rules over the analysis of causes" (Cádima, 1996,

⁴ One should notice that nowadays video incomes exceed movie tickets sales.

138); prevails the dramatized event refractory to real problematic facts. Politicians are now, more and more, assessed as an insubstantial production of a scenographic industry. Politics has suffered a mutation of very perverse consequences.⁵ Political struggles are increasingly decided by performative skills of the politicians than the value of their arguments. In the world of technological cultural industries instead of media scrutiny of politicians civil virtue and competences we have spectacles, rather than news we have pseudo-events. It is feared, therefore, that political rationality fades dramatically in the order of entertainment and spectacular scenography (Rodrigues, n.d.).

The relationship between public and private space has been undergoing another worrying redefinition under the pressures of consumption and new media. The boom of shopping centers in the eighties and nineties brought a new reality, in this case for the way we perceive and use urban public spaces.

In 2006 Portugal we had about 78 shopping centers with over 5,000 square meters, which corresponded to more than 1.6 million square feet of commercial floor area (Grace & Scott, 2006). Despite this advance our average per 1000 inhabitants is around only 139 square meters, falling far below the European average of 163 and the extraordinary 525 in Norway, which can contain the entire population of this country. These new structures of leisure and fun acquired such importance that began to change the way people interact and the very structure of urban routines. In Portugal 63.9% of the inquired individuals says they visit shopping centers, while the average corresponds to 17 visits per year.

Certain is that these spaces, private nature, but of circulation and collective use, brought a new reality. In the world of hyperchoice, triumphing in theatrical consumption of objects, or allegedly personalized and usually falsely differences, these new spaces replaced the Neon arteries by "huge cathedrals of entertainment, parade, identification of objects and collective glorification" (Beja Santos, 2006: 2). In fact, not only do these spaces have new features that were previously alien to the local consumer – the art galleries, the spaces of fun for children, stage shows, theaters – as they even replicate the traditional spaces and streets. The immediate consequence of fascination for these new spaces of consumption and leisure, usually peripheral, is the progressive physical and symbolic emptying of traditional public space, which lost its role as a privi-

⁵ "The field of legitimizing politically effective action is not only altered in its traditional assumptions, as well as it is transferred to the field of media, embodying figures (not systems), redundancy (not analysis), spectacularization (not rationality) and finally figures of oblivion (not memory). Thus emerges a kind of catholic democracy, of plebiscitary nature and in permanence – a kind of 'doxocracy', where excellence in acting and performing becomes the ground for legitimacy" (Cádima, 1996, 144).

leged space for leisure and socialization. In some cases, public space reacted by mimicking large supermarkets and even ran for leasing and privatization. But the truth is that the exodus continued, fruit of the dazzle for the aseptic environment of new private spaces, alongside the increasing agoraphobia. Today people seem particularly favor the protection of the personal sphere and anonymity over open contexts of interaction and contact, thus preferring controlled environments to traditional public space. However the late does not seem to be able to compete with former spaces, easily accessible and capable of ensuring a wide variety of experiences, as well as offering regulated environmental conditions and controlled security through human and video surveillance systems. Which means they help creates the cited context of panopticon, where everyone knows that may be being observed at any time and so assumes a socially normalized behavior. A phenomenon that codes of manners for commercial spaces appeared to define with clarity and rigor. That's why these new private spaces for collective consumption are enjoying a strong sense of well-being and safety.⁶

Meanwhile, cities and their public spaces are losing the roles of yore. A process that is aggravated by the current trend towards agorophobia and claustrophobia, who brought the proliferation of private condominiums and private concessions parks, squares and terraces, leaving the public space a sad residual role, emptied of meaning, physical and symbolically degraded (Grace & Scott, 2006).

These functional alterations of spaces, public and private, challenge us to weigh the pros and cons of each mutation and thus seek to foresee what will best serve our values of democracy and citizenship, as well as the necessary balance between individual interests and the collective ones, i.e., the idea, advocated by Pieiller (2007), that true freedom is the one that recognizes that dependency and free development of each and every person cannot be disconnected. Neither the safety of some can be sustained under the exclusion of many, as well the "narcissistic bubble" cannot survive without the social fabric in which it is rooted. What all this motivates us to say is that we need to rethink private and the public in the context of our media and consumerist society.

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PRIVAČIOS IR VIEŠOS ERDVĖS HIPERMEDINĖSE IR VARTOTOJIŠKOSE VISUOMENĖSE

Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje aptariamas viešųjų ir privačių erdvių apibrėžimas hypermedinėse visuomenėse, kurioms didžiulį poveikį daro mediatizacija. Viena vertus, mes matome privačių erdvių eroziją ir invaziją pagal didelį žiniasklaidos virtualumo mastą; kita vertus, mes matome plintantį viešųjų erdvių skverbimąsi, kurios praranda orumą ir funkcionalumą. Paradoksalu, tačiau mūsų vartotojiškos ir hypermedinės visuomenės prisideda prie privačių erdvių suvaržymo.

Straipsnyje bandoma ieškoti atsakymų į klausimus, kodėl mūsų svetainėse dominuoja TV šou? Kodėl tiek daug svetainių, atrodo, iš karto žino mūsų pageidavimus? Kodėl mūsų gatvės pilnos reklaminių skydų ir neoninių iškabų? Kodėl mes matome, kaip prekybos centrai pakeičia skverus, kurie palaipsniui sumenksta ar tiesiog pradingsta? Kodėl šie centrai yra privati saugomi, o viešosios erdvės vis labiau ir labiau kelia baimę dėl savo nesaugumo? Šie funkciniai viešųjų ir privačių erdvių pakyciai verčia mus apsvarstyti kiekvieno pokyčio privalumus ir trūkumus bei paklausti, ar jie tarnauja mūsų demokratijos ir pilietiškumo vertybėms.

Galiausiai, mes pabrėžiame, kad šis reiškinys yra iššūkis švietimui, kuris turi nuspręsti, ar mes norime atgauti šias erdves ir žinoti, kaip jomis naudotis.