



6-2000

# Media Multiplication and Social Segmentation

Elihu Katz

University of Pennsylvania, [ekatz@asc.upenn.edu](mailto:ekatz@asc.upenn.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://repository.upenn.edu/asc\\_papers](http://repository.upenn.edu/asc_papers)

---

## Recommended Citation

Katz, E. (2000). Media Multiplication and Social Segmentation. *Ethical Perspectives*, 7 (2-3), 122-132. Retrieved from [http://repository.upenn.edu/asc\\_papers/161](http://repository.upenn.edu/asc_papers/161)

Publisher URL: [http://www.ethical-perspectives.be/page.php?LAN=E&FILE=ep\\_detail&ID=26&TID=136](http://www.ethical-perspectives.be/page.php?LAN=E&FILE=ep_detail&ID=26&TID=136)

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. [http://repository.upenn.edu/asc\\_papers/161](http://repository.upenn.edu/asc_papers/161)  
For more information, please contact [libraryrepository@pobox.upenn.edu](mailto:libraryrepository@pobox.upenn.edu).

---

# Media Multiplication and Social Segmentation

## **Abstract**

By now, everybody has heard of the 'bourgeois public sphere,' that moment in history when a rising merchant class felt empowered enough to deliberate public policy rationally and universalistically, and to transmit its conclusions to the powers-that-were with the expectation of being taken seriously. By academic standards Habermas's (1962/1989) thesis has become a household word, perhaps because it offers a nostalgic reminder of a lost utopia of participatory democracy, or because it offers hope of what yet might be — if we could only learn to translate the seventeenth century into the ostensibly compatible conditions of a modernity in which widespread education, universal suffrage and the new communications technologies would seem to invite such translation.

But this is not the whole of Habermas's thesis, nor its most original part. The rest of it revolves around the 'representative public sphere' which refers both to the period that preceded, and the period that followed, that of the newly autonomous bourgeoisie. In the earlier period, it refers to the person of the monarch, to the dazzle and charisma of his regalia, symbols of the legitimacy of his rule and the unity of his realm. That's not such a new idea either.

What is new is Habermas's suggestion that the period following the 'bourgeois public sphere' — that is, our here and now — is essentially a return to the charisma of the 'representative public sphere,' not that of the absolute monarch to be sure, but of a political and economic establishment that has armed itself with image makers and spin doctors who dazzle and charm in the name of the legitimacy and prerogatives of their clients. As Calhoun (1992) puts it, summarizing Habermas, "By means of these transformations, the public sphere has become more an arena for advertising than a setting for rational/critical debate.

## **Comments**

Publisher URL: [http://www.ethical-perspectives.be/page.php?LAN=E&FILE=ep\\_detail&ID=26&TID=136](http://www.ethical-perspectives.be/page.php?LAN=E&FILE=ep_detail&ID=26&TID=136)



---

## *Media Multiplication and Social Segmentation*<sup>1</sup>

Elihu Katz

By now, everybody has heard of the 'bourgeois public sphere,' that moment in history when a rising merchant class felt empowered enough to deliberate public policy rationally and universalistically, and to transmit its conclusions to the powers-that-were with the expectation of being taken seriously. By academic standards Habermas's (1962/1989) thesis has become a household word, perhaps because it offers a nostalgic reminder of a lost utopia of participatory democracy, or because it offers hope of what yet might be — if we could only learn to translate the seventeenth century into the ostensibly compatible conditions of a modernity in which widespread education, universal suffrage and the new communications technologies would seem to invite such translation.

But this is not the whole of Habermas's thesis, nor its most original part. The rest of it revolves around the 'representative public sphere' which refers *both* to the period that preceded, and the period that followed, that of the newly autonomous bourgeoisie. In the earlier period, it refers to the person of the monarch, to the dazzle and charisma of his regalia, symbols of the legitimacy of his rule and the unity of his realm. That's not such a new idea either.

What *is* new is Habermas's suggestion that the period *following* the 'bourgeois public sphere' — that is, our here and now — is essentially a return to the charisma of the 'representative public sphere,' not that of the absolute monarch to be sure, but of a political and economic establishment that has armed itself with image makers and spin doctors who dazzle and charm in the name of the legitimacy and prerogatives of their clients.<sup>2</sup> As Calhoun (1992) puts it, summarizing Habermas, "By means of these transformations, the public sphere has become more an arena for advertising than a setting for rational/critical debate.

Legislators stage displays for constituents. Special interest organizations use publicity to increase the prestige of their own positions, without making the topics to which these positions refer subjects of genuine public debate. The media are used to create occasions for consumers to identify with the public positions or personae of others. All this amounts to the return of a version of representative publicity, to which the public responds by acclamation, or the withholding of acclamation, rather than critical discourse."

With that as a preface, this paper will proceed in three parts. Part One will develop the idea of the classic public sphere, drawing not so much on Habermas, but on some of his predecessors and others, and especially on the French social psychologist, Gabriel Tarde. I will show how Tarde's conception of the public sphere applies not only to the newspaper but perhaps even more to broadcasting. I will say a few words about how well the European model of public broadcasting fits (or better: used to fit) this vision of the public sphere. I will also introduce data from a recent American study that puts Tarde's scheme to an empirical test.

Then, I will shift gears. Still drawing on Tarde — but a different Tarde — Part Two will show another side of the same story, focusing more on the technology of the media, and their effect, not on individuals but on institutions. This part of the argument will show how the media, in succession — newspapers, radio, TV, internet — contribute not to the making of democracy, but to its unmaking. This part will lead to a discussion of our present situation of multi-channel television — over the air, on cable, via satellite — and the internet. To anticipate the climax of this part, let me say that we will find ourselves arguing that the new media are no longer geared to the nation-state and the public sphere.



---

The concluding Part Three will try to confront the opposing tendencies of the two earlier parts. But it will do so in an academic effort at puzzle-solving rather than as a statement of deep conviction. The truth is I don't know the answers.

Part I.

*Gabriel Tarde's Public Sphere*

The idea of a public sphere in which government is the addressee of a society of citizens did not originate with Habermas, of course. It is essentially a restatement of the emergence of a public opinion which, to my mind, was best characterized by Hans Speier (1950). Distinguishing private or clandestine opinion, from 'opinions disclosed to others', Speier conceives of public opinion as a two-fold process of communication whereby (1) citizens deliberate with each other over issues of public concern, and (2) transmit these deliberations to government. Like Habermas, Speier adds that the persons deliberating should not themselves be officials of the state and that their deliberations should be anchored in a shared belief both in freedom of expression and the right to be influential. The interweaving of opinion and communication also figures in de Tocqueville's (1935/1969) well-known interest in American associationism, in Lord Bryce's (1985/1991) observations about the press and conversation, and in other classic writings.

My own favorite is Gabriel Tarde, the French jurist, criminologist, and social psychologist whose turn-of-the-century essay, 'Opinion and Conversation' (Tarde, 1901/1989) spells out the four elements of the public sphere: press, conversation, opinion and action. I dare say that Tarde was not so much interested in a normative theory of democracy, but rather in observing how collective behaviour was pressed, willy nilly, into the service of democracy.<sup>1</sup> There are several advantages to drawing on Tarde more than the others. First of all, he knows what a conversation sounds like. Unlike Habermas, Tarde alludes to the kinds of conversations that actually went on in cafes,

coffeehouses, and salons. These are the familiar, intimate, aimless interchanges that wander in and out of political matters, but are by no means limited to them. The conversations, Tarde noted, go on among individuals who are rather similar to each other, both in status and in worldview. They are not what Habermas calls forth in his ideal speech situations; they do not involve 'bracketings' of status or acceptance of the rules of reason before setting foot in the public arena. Nor would they qualify for what Michael Schudson (1997) would call 'political talk,' which, in his view, is confrontational, and often painful, talk among ideological adversaries aiming toward legislation, as in parliaments. By contrast, Tarde's conversations are pleasurable, usually effortless.

A second advantage of calling on Tarde is that he treats the four elements of the public sphere as a linear system such that (1) the press, typically reporting on government, delivers an agenda of issues for discussion (2) to persons gathered in the cafes, coffeehouses and salons where talk goes on. These conversations (3) percolate opinions, clarifying them as they move from cafe to cafe and crystallize into one or two public opinions, which are translated (4) into action. By action, Tarde refers both to choice at the individual level — voting, for example, but also consumer choices — and the reactions of government to public opinion. Tarde's definition of action at the individual level is rather weak, limited as it is to making choices, but he is keenly aware of how the representation of consensual opinion by the press constitutes what he calls a "brake on government."

A third advantage of Tarde is that he takes us beyond functional theory to the edge of technological determinism. From this point of view, the press is not just a purveyor of information or a supplier of agendas; it is also a powerful agent of nation-building. Tarde sees the press as an essential agent of national integration.



The shared language of the press and its circulation defines the nation's borders, and the shared experience of reading the day's agenda — aware that everyone else in one's orbit is doing the same thing at the same time — creates a sense of nationhood, what Benedict Anderson (1991) calls 'imagined community.'

Tarde shows how this sense of shared membership also unified the parliament. Prior to the press, says Tarde, delegates of the several provinces each had veto power over the applicability of rules and laws to their particular constituencies. As the experience of community grew stronger, thanks to the press, majority rule was introduced, and became binding on all.

#### *Applying Tarde to Broadcasting*

A quarter of a century after Tarde's death, radio broadcasting was to begin. At the functional level, the new medium seemed a great step forward for participatory democracy, fulfilling the promise of simultaneity to which the press had aspired, enfranchising the less literate, and creating a new focus of shared experience of culture and of politics. Both the American and British models of how radio might be governed served these functions. The United States licensed individual stations which soon formed themselves into a small number of commercial networks to cover the entire country, purveying a diet of entertainment, and ultimately of news, and the advertising which paid the bills.

Britain explicitly rejected the American model, thanks to John Reith, who argued that the airwaves were not only public property, but a potential public utility which could build the nation as a shared community of culture and civic discussion. It was Reith, almost single-handedly, who persuaded the British government to transform the monopoly it had first given to an association of radio manufacturers into a public broadcasting authority which aimed to be independent both of government and of commerce (Briggs, 1961). The BBC was an important social invention. It is striking that a government should (by law and by

convention) voluntarily relinquish its control of the airwaves in favour of a service of information, education and entertainment operated by professionals with a paternalistic orientation, overseen by an apolitical board of distinguished people, and owned, in effect, by a public of shareholders paying a quasi-tax directly to the Broadcasting Authority itself. It is something like the idea of a tax-supported public university, but riskier, inasmuch as the day-to-day mass production of quality entertainment and critical discourse could, and sometimes does, turn against government itself.

Cardiff and Scannell (1987) graphically describe how the new-born BBC began to invent traditions that would connect the several British regions to each other in the celebration of religious and civic holidays. It brought the periphery to the centre, and the centre to the periphery — in the King's annual Christmas message, for example. Even before the establishment of a broadcast news service — when the objections of newspapers were finally overcome, both in Britain and the U.S. — radio was a powerful agent of national integration, and in both World Wars served as the hallmark of togetherness.

After World War II, television followed in radio's footsteps as the medium of national integration, pushing radio into its new role as medium of segmentation and everyman's personal companion. Soon, there were radio stations for every age, status, and interest group, while television took over as the national focus of culture and politics. Over the 'objections' of the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972), who feared nothing as much as the homogenization of the culture of the classes, television did just that: it committed the crime of melding "Benny Goodman and the Budapest String Quartet" into a false consciousness of national unity, or, if we put hegemony aside, into just a plain fusion of national identity.



Wherever broadcasting went, the norms of balance and fairness went with it. The American institution of pre-election television debates is an example of the ostensible rational/critical balance which television has brought to politics. The idea that the electorate should get a good look at the candidates in a rule-governed contest has now become virtually universal, and has spread even beyond the democracies. Altogether, it seems fair to say, with Ithiel Pool (1983), that democratic polities were well served by broadcasting — both radio and television — and that public broadcasting, perhaps especially in its monopolistic phase, provided both an agenda and a forum for the public sphere.

#### *An Empirical Example*

Lest you think this is all too pretty — you won't in a few minutes — I can document empirically that Tarde's system works. Together with Joohan Kim, my doctoral student, and Robert Wyatt, we have shown, for the United States, that there is indeed a linear relationship among press (that is, media), conversation, opinion, and action. The results of our national survey, published recently (Kim, Wyatt, Katz, 1999; Wyatt, Kim, Katz, 2000) demonstrate that the frequency of reading newspapers and, to a lesser extent, the frequency of viewing television news, increases political (and even personal) conversation. This is true after the obvious background variables, and even political interest, have been taken into account. You will not be surprised to learn that the most frequently discussed issues are crime and education, followed by the economy, local and national government, and lastly, foreign affairs. Family matters, entertainment and sports were more frequent subjects of discussion than most of the political issues, however. You may be surprised that the extent of viewing TV in general — not especially news — increased such personal, but not political, conversation.

The locus of discussion — of political as well as personal matters — is the home, followed by the workplace and civic organizations. Presumably, this reflects the home-centred character of the media, the protected environment of the home, and, not least, the evident fact that spouses seem to have begun to talk politics with each other.<sup>4</sup> This means, of course, that political conversation is not often confrontational; it goes on among the like-minded. Moreover, our findings suggest that when crime and education are discussed at home, they are often moved out of the political and into the personal domain. In our study, restaurants, bars and shopping malls — today's equivalent of cafes — were not important loci of political conversation; neither was the internet.

Following Tarde, we then ask whether and how political conversation affects opinion. The answer is that it increases the number of issues on which people hold opinions, and equips discussants with the ability to offer more reasons in defence of their opinions. To our surprise, however, conversation does not appear to increase the consistency among an individual's opinions.

These measures of the quality of opinion contribute, but not strongly, to political participation such as attending political meetings, working in political campaigns, contacting candidates by letter or by telephone, and voting. Political conversation, on the other hand, is a major contributory factor in political participation, along with being male, having higher income, and following the news.

Voilà. Participatory democracy is alive, and the media have a central share in its functioning. Or do they?

#### Part II.

#### *Another Look at Tarde*

If we take a second look, we will find another Tarde, less functionally oriented, and far more concerned with the effects of the media — the newspaper, in his case — on institutions.





To a certain extent, we might even say that Tarde is a technological theorist, anticipating McLuhan (1964), Innis (1950) and Eisenstein (1979), more interested in the medium than the message. Looking back, we have already had a glimpse of this Tarde, in his discussion of the role of the newspaper in national integration, both of the nation as a whole, and in the parliament, where the newspaper-enriched sense of nationhood constrained majority rule.

But Tarde takes a further step in this role, in asserting that the newspaper overthrew the monarchy. His argument is based on the idea that only the king — the representative public sphere — had had knowledge of what was going on in the various villages and regions of his realm; he had spies and bureaucrats to tell him, and he was in no special hurry to let Village A find out what Village B was thinking. The newspaper did exactly this and thereby undermined the king, says Tarde: it made him redundant.

#### *Applying This Tarde to the Electronic Media*

If we apply this line of thinking to the media that succeeded the newspaper — radio, television, and now the internet — a new picture will emerge, very different from the one we have just seen. Radio, then television, not only displaced the newspaper, and each other, as the predominant medium of national integration; they not only served the public sphere functionally; they also — like the newspaper — gnawed away at the institutions of governance.

In the case of radio, first of all, we may note that the earliest political users of radio — in the United States and in Germany — were Roosevelt and, *mutatis mutandis*, Hitler. Soon after assuming office in the early '30s, Roosevelt began his series of fireside chats, through which he established an intimate relationship with families at home who responded, with warmth, to his plan for a New Deal, and, years later, to his attempt to persuade Americans that the United States must commit itself to an active role in World War II. Note that radio appeals went directly from the president to

the people, over the heads of the Congress, creating a personalized leadership that ultimately led to what would be called, in Nixon's day, the 'imperial presidency.'

Hitler, of course, went further. He simply disbanded the parliament and spoke directly to the people at mass rallies and over the radio. Victor Klemperer's (1998) diaries give us a glimpse of the ceremony that surrounded Hitler's harangues, and the diarist's fear of their effectiveness.<sup>5</sup> Both leaders inspired a high rate of participation. But we see here the beginning of the erosion of the rational/critical ideal, and the weakening of the intermediacy of the parliament in favour of the charisma of the leader. Indeed, it looks like the king's revenge. The newspaper overthrew charisma, and radio reinstated it.

If we now apply this kind of analysis to television, we see more of the same institutional slippage. It seems obvious that television finished what radio had begun. It moved politics inside the home. Although Hallin and Mancini have suggested that television news sends Italian viewers outside, in search of discussion and interpretation — in the piazza, at the trade-union hall or at party headquarters — it seems more likely that Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) were right in proposing that broadcast news, typically, dies in the living room. True, our own research suggests that conversation follows viewing and that conversation often leads to political action, a lot remains to be done to validate the image of the home as a public place, and political action as a widespread phenomenon. It is too soon to abandon the idea that broadcast news may have a 'narcotizing dysfunction' for most viewers.

A more radical formulation of this process would propose that television disintermediated the political party. Neighbourhood party organization has all but disappeared, and political allegiances have weakened substantially in the Western world (Lipset and Reinhard, 1992).



There is good reason to suppose, at the level of media ethics, that the even-handedness of television, and its visual imagery, have something to do with this — together with moving politics inside, of course. The huge viewership of American pre-election debates, for example, combats the selective attention of an earlier day. It used to be that one rallied, or read, or listened only to one's own side (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948), whereas today's television debates invite attention to both sides equally (Kraus, 1962). And what one sees and hears is very centrist talk, and well-rehearsed sounds and images. As a result, the candidates seem almost equally acceptable. Neither party affiliation nor ideology is much on display, and programmes of action look and sound rather similar.

Ostensibly, the absence of political parties should not be at odds with Habermasian discourse, which strives for a rhetoric of reason; but it is hard to say that contemporary election campaigns, even television debates, epitomize rational interaction from which optimal answers for the commonwealth will likely emerge.<sup>6</sup> Habermas, who fears all kinds of visual representation (Peters, 1993), would certainly agree. Calhoun (1992) quotes him as saying that “the sphere generated by the mass media has taken on the traits of a secondary realm of intimacy.” “We experience radio, film and television communication,” in Calhoun's paraphrase, with an immediacy far greater than that characteristic of the printed word. One of the effects of this on public discourse is that ‘bracketing’ personal attributes and concentrating on the rational-critical argument becomes more difficult. This feeds into a more general sentimentality toward persons and corresponding cynicism toward institutions, which curtails the “subjective capacity for rational criticism of public authority, even where it might objectively still be possible.’ A personalized politics revives representative publicity by making candidates into media stars.”

So, in the same way that newspaper overthrew the king, we may say that radio disintermediated the parliament in favour of the (elected) leader, and television undermined the political party, in favour of a politics of personality. What's next?

### *The New Media Technology*

The new media technology have one outstanding characteristic: they no longer provide a medium of national integration. From a technologically deterministic point of view — that is, if the media affect political institutions in the way we have been arguing — the nation itself is dropping out of sight.

How so? First of all, we are witnessing the death of television as we knew it in the incredible multiplication of television channels. Thanks to the technological capacity of cable and satellite, plus the capitulation of governments to the behests of the media barons, the shared national experience of broadcasting is being dramatically impoverished. It is ironic to see how conservative governments, presumably committed to patriotism, succumb to the temptations of privatizing the broadcasting system and undermining the centrality of public broadcasting. Scandal and sensation seem to be by-products of this populist competition, and the news will soon be driven out of prime time. Indeed, we are witnessing a deep crisis in public broadcasting everywhere. Faced with the cruel choice of becoming an elitist channel for the politically and culturally minded, or a mass channel that is hardly different from its private competitors, its future, even its survival, is very uncertain.

Even more striking is the proliferation of segmented channels, aiming for ethnic or religious audiences, or for specialty audiences interested only in sports, or arts, or news — but cut off from the majority of the population. The central arena, the public forum in which different kinds of people could talk to, or at least listen to, each other is fading away.





Both the mere multiplication of channels, and now the rise of specialized channels, are changing the character of public space. Television is no longer uniting us; it is a different medium, even if we continue to give it the same 40% of our leisure time.

And now the internet is rising rapidly as the predominant medium of communication, but certainly not as a medium of national integration. For the first time in 100 years, the nation is out of focus. With all its magnificent potential, the internet is geared toward transnational networks of communication — diasporas, if you like, and other particular interests — as well as the intimacy of private communication. Combined with a broadcasting capability, it has the potential of reaching a national audience, but it is unlikely to do so, or so it seems to me.

If one were to sum up the apparent 'teleology' of present-day media, one might say that it has two tendencies — one toward individuation, the other toward globalization. Individuation means that the new media can tailor themselves and their messages to highly particularistic tastes: one can design the newspaper one wishes ('anything but the Middle East,' for example), or program for the tastes of a sub-group. Globalism means that certain messages and genres — the World Cup, or the Pope, or 'Dallas' — can captivate everybody everywhere. Note that neither of these tendencies makes room for the nation-state. To the list of democratic institutions undermined by the electronic media — even while contributing to democratic participation — we can now add the nation itself: parliament, party, nation. Rhetorically, this adds to a pretty picture: the press consolidated the nation and defrocked charisma; the new media reinstated charisma and undermined the nation.

Part III.

*Where Are We?*

Welcome to post-modernism. It is very difficult to decide where reality is. On the one hand, we have

some evidence that the public sphere is functioning, from the American study I have reported, and from a Flemish study, which sounds similar. Many people keep up with politics; they are not as ignorant as is thought.<sup>7</sup> They read newspapers and watch the TV news. They talk to others, and associate with them, in spite of the resonance of Putnam's thesis (1995).<sup>8</sup> They form opinions on the issues of the day. They act — though only a minority do more than vote, and even voting is in decline.<sup>9</sup> Fewer than half of all Americans actually present themselves at the polling places for national elections; ironically more watch the pre-election debates on TV.

On the other hand, we see that the institutions of democracy are faltering, and perhaps the media are partly to blame. The broadcast media, and now the internet, reach people at home, over the heads of the parliament, the political party, and even the nation. We wanted the media to be an independent voice, and to provide a platform, but within a shared constituency, not an amorphous mass society offering an illusory sense of empowerment. The message is consumerism, the cynical entertainment of political scandal, the PR of establishments, and the seductions of globalism. True, the internet provides much more opportunity for reaction and participation — it is a great medium for organizing a pressure group — but very few internet users seem to spend time on citizenship when they are on line. And creeping commercialism is rampant here too.

I want to explore two implications that arise from this discussion, and to offer them not as conclusions but as puzzles, as dilemmas for theory and research.

The first puzzle might be entitled 'citizens without democracy', or in a more familiar form, 'citizens without a nation'. This title reverses Robert Entman's (1989) *Democracy Without Citizens*, which implied that the system works reasonably well, even without much participation; this paper argues, instead, that there is participation, or what looks like participation, but that the



framework has collapsed. There are a lot of people treading the waters of participatory politics, but they aren't getting anywhere. Lazarsfeld and Merton's 'narcotizing dysfunction' sums up this kind of ritualism by pointing to the heavy consumers of news who delude themselves into believing that they are 'in' politics, while their attentiveness, conversation, even their opinions, do not get beyond the living room. There is a short-circuit, in other words. Many citizens are performing their responsibilities, or trying to, but the mechanisms for communicating and aggregating their actions have somehow eroded.

The missing links are the institutions: the voluntary organizations, the trade unions, the political parties, the parliament who, ironically, are being experienced as psychologically more distant, even if communication with them is ostensibly easier, not more difficult. Political institutions are weakened, and the public sphere itself — as embodied in the media, at least — is being commercialized, addressing audiences as consumers rather than citizens. In spite of Inglehart (1997), egoism and materialism are rampant; the shopping mall has outdistanced the public square, the town meeting, the legislature and the political party. People have more confidence in commercial organizations than in political ones, including journalism (Wyatt, unpublished). We appear to be creeping back to the classic mass society model where charismatic leaders and masses had unmediated access to each other (Kornhauser, 1959). Now, even the leaders have lost moral authority.

Perhaps one of the two parts is simply incorrect. A cursory review of the evidence would suggest that part one — on citizen participation — is the better supported, but part two — on institutional failure — is more convincing. If they are both true, how else can the two pieces of this puzzle be reconciled? Is there a better way?

The second puzzle is related. Its ultimate concern is with the future of public broadcasting. It will argue, from part one, that citizens would want to strengthen public broadcasting, and from part two, that the institutions for accomplishing this are

out of reach, or non-existent.

The way to think about this, in my opinion, is to note the symbiotic relationship between the structure of the media and structure of society, without prejudging (as part two tended to do) which comes first. Israel is the case I know best. During the strongly collectivistic nation-building phase of the society, there were plural social movements, each rallied around a newspaper, pursuing a common goal in radically different ways, but united around monopoly broadcasting, first radio then television. During the trying days of the radio era, people followed the news on the hour, and discussed it in the streets, at work, at community and party and union meetings, and at home. Television gathered everybody — and I mean everybody, or almost everybody — for the 9 p.m. news. It was an unwritten rule not even to make telephone calls during these 30-40 minutes, and to be prepared to discuss the agenda next morning at work. With greater security and prosperity, materialism and egoism gained ground. This was reflected in the rise of consumerist institutions, and, in parallel, the introduction of a second advertising-based, commercial TV channel. Later, when separatist yearnings began to displace pluralism with multiculturalism, we observe the rise of specialized broadcasting channels, and a gradual retreat from major channels. Most viewing, as Curran (1998) insists for the UK, is still with the two over-the-air channels, but my bet is that this will gradually dissipate — unless a crisis, or better a basketball game, brings us together again as a nation. The structure of nation and media are closely interlinked, not only in Israel.

True, a strong broadcasting system can hold a nation together. But let us now add: only if it wants to be held together. In spite of the technological flavour of this paper, I am afraid that the latter is prerequisite to the former. For public broadcasting, this means that "it takes a nation."



The vigour of culture and broadcasting in Quebec provides an interesting contemporary example.

Let me reiterate what we mean, or used to mean, by public broadcasting. It is a media system (1) based on a society of shareholders — a citizenry that owns, and feels that it owns, the system. It is (2) administered by a board of trusted, civic-minded, and creative people who protect it jealously against the infringements of government and commerce. It is (3) staffed by professionals whose motto is that the customer — that is, the citizen — is not always right, but needs to be well served. Its programming is guided (4) by criteria of quality and relevance, with an eye to the continuity of cultures of the nation and of the groups that constitute it, (5) by concern for diversity of expression — even competing news programmes are thinkable, for example, and (6) by a commitment to broadcast news and public affairs in prime time. Its hallmark is (7) that the plurality of groups and interests that make up the society see and hear each other in the *same arena* — on matters of civics and of culture — along with the professional voices of broadcasters and experts. From which it follows (8) that it is viewed by everybody, more or less. Incidentally, this is why one can argue that a monopoly public

system — a one-channel society — may be *more* democratic than a multi-channel one.

I repeat, to reinstate this kind of broadcasting system would seem to require a renewed commitment to the idea of nation. Pluralism to be sure, but an imagined community of shared identity along with institutions that make it work.

Transnational identities, multinational interests, and the technologies of communication may be making the nation superfluous. With it, the will for a nation may wither. New social arrangements may be making for new forms of identity and new structures of participation that will displace the kinds of allegiance and investment — emotional and rational — that accompanied national citizenship. The nation may be reduced to a mere administrative unit, defined geographically for convenience. Perhaps that might even make for a better world, one that spares us from the excesses of nationalism.

The puzzle with which I leave you is whether there is any other way to reinstate the kind of public broadcasting which would suit the apparent desire for a participatory democracy, and whether the idea of repairing the nation in order to repair public broadcasting isn't asking too much.

### *Literature*

- ANDERSON, Benedict (1991), *The Imagined Community: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London, Verso.
- APPADURAI, Arjun (1996), *Modernity at Large*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- BOORSTIN, Daniel (1964), *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo Events in America*. New York, Harper and Row.
- BRIGGS, Asa (1961), *History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*. Vol. I: *The Birth of Broadcasting*. London, Oxford University Press.
- BRYCE, James (1895/1991), *The American Commonwealth*. New York, MacMillan.
- CALHOUN, Craig (1992) (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge (Mass.), MIT press, x-498 pp.
- CARDIFF, David, Paddy SCANNELL (1987). 'Broadcasting and National Unity' in J. CURRAN, A. SMITH, Pauline WINGATE, (eds.), *Impact and Influences: Essays on Media Power in the Twentieth Century*. London, Methuen.
- CAREY, James (1967), 'Harold Adams Innis and Marshall McLuhan' in *Antioch Review*, 27(1967)1, pp. 5-39.
- CLARK, Terry (ed.) (1969), *Gabriel Tarde on Communication and Social Influence*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- CURRAN, James (1998), 'Crisis of Public Communication: A Reappraisal' in T. LIEBES, J. CURRAN (eds.), *Media, Ritual, Identity*, London: Routledge.
- DE TOCQUEVILLE, Alexis (1835/1969), *Democracy in America* Transl. J.P. Maier. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- DE SOLA POOL, Ithiel (1983), *Technologies of Freedom*. Cambridge (Mass.), Belknap Press of Harvard University.



- DELLI CARPINI, Michael X. *et al.* (1996), *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*. New Haven (Conn.), Yale University Press.
- EISENSTEIN, Elizabeth L. (1979), *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- ENTMAN, Robert (1989), *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989.
- FREIDSON, Eliot (1953), 'The Relation of the Situation of Contact to the Media in Mass Communication' in *Public Opinion Quarterly* 17(1953), pp. 230-238.
- GITLIN, Todd (1998), 'Public Sphere or Public Sphercules' in Tamar LIEBES, James CURRAN (eds.), *Media, Ritual, Identity*. London, Routledge.
- HABERMAS, Jurgen (1962-1989), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Transl. Thomas Burger (Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit). Cambridge, Polity press, XIX-301 pp.
- HANDELMAN, Don, Elihu KATZ (1990), 'State Ceremonies of Israel' in Don HANDELMAN, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events*. New York, Cambridge University Press, pp. 191-233.
- HORKHEIMER, Max, Theodore ADORNO (1972), *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York, Continuum.
- INGLEHART, Ronald (1997), *Modernization and Postmodernization: cultural, economic, and political change in 43 societies*. Princeton (N.J.), Princeton University Press
- INNIS, Harold (1950), *Empire and Communication*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- KATZ, Elihu (1988), 'Disintermediation: Cutting Out the Middle Man' in *Intermedia*, 16(1988), pp. 30-31.
- KATZ, Elihu (1992), 'Individualisation, segmentation, mondialisation: La technologie de la télévision et l'état-nation,' in A. CARON, P. JUNEAU (eds.), *Le défi des télévisions nationales a l'ère de la mondialisation*. Montreal, Presses de l'Université de Montreal, pp. 133-144.
- KATZ, Elihu (1996), 'And Deliver Us from Segmentation.' in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. July.
- KATZ, Elihu (1998), 'Mass Media and Participatory Democracy' in T. INOBUCHI *et al.* (eds.), *The Changing Nature of Democracy*. Tokyo, UN University Press.
- KATZ, Elihu, Hanna ADONI (1973), 'Functions of the Book for Society and Self,' in *Diogenes*, 81(1973).
- KATZ, Elihu, Sharon DOKTER, Jodi GUSEK, Miriam METZGER, Jacqueline O'CONNELL, Jane STOKES (1998), 'Press-Conversation-Opinion-Action: Gabriel Tarde's Public Sphere' in J. LAUTMAN, B. LECUYER (eds.), *Paul Lazarsfeld (1901-1976): La Sociologie de Vienne à New York*. Paris, L'Harmattan.
- KATZ, Ruth, Elihu KATZ (1998), 'McLuhan: Where Did He Come From, Where Did He Disappear?' in *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 23(1998)3, pp. 307-319.
- KIM, Joochan, Robert WYATT, Elihu KATZ (1999), 'News, Talk, Opinion, Participation: The Part Played by Conversation in Deliberative Democracy' in *Political Communication* 16(1999)4, pp. 361-386.
- KLEMPERER, Victor (1998), *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years, 1933-1941*. Vol. I. (trans. Martin Chalmers). New York, Random House.
- KORNHAUSER, William (1959), *The Politics of Mass Society*. Glencoe (IL), Free Press.
- KRAUS, Sidney (1962), *The Great Debates*. Bloomington (IN), Indiana University Press.
- LAZARSFELD, Paul F., Bernard BERELSON, Hazel GAUDET (1948), *The People's Choice*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- LAZARSFELD, Paul F., Robert K. MERTON (1948), 'Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organized Social Action' in L. BRYSON (ed.), *The Communication of Ideas*. New York, Harper.
- LIPSET, Seymour Martin, Bendix, REINHARD (1992), *Social Mobility in Industrial Society*. New Brunswick (N.J.), Transaction.
- MCLUHAN, Marshall (1964), *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York, McGraw-Hill.
- MOSCOVICI, Serge (1985), *The Age of the Crowd*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- PETERS, John D. (1993), 'Distrust of Representation: Habermas and the Public Sphere.' in *Media, Culture and Society*, 15(1993)4, pp. 541-557.
- POSTMAN, Neal (1986), *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. London, Heinemann.
- PUTNAM, Robert (1995), 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital' in *Journal of Democracy*, 6(1995), pp. 65-78.



- RIESMAN, David, Reuel DENNY, Nathan GLAZER (1950), *The Lonely Crowd*. New Haven, Yale University.
- RUSSO, Michael (1983), *CBS and the American Political Experience: A History of the CBS News Special Events and Elections Unit 1952-1968*. Ann Arbor, University Microfilms.
- SCHOLEM, Gershom (1973), *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*. Trans. R.J.Z. WERBLOWSKI. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- SCHUDSON, Michael (1997), 'Why Conversation Is Not the Soul of Democracy?' in *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 14(1997), pp. 297-309.
- SCHUDSON, Michael (1998). *The Good Citizen*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- SPEIER, Hans (1950), 'On the Historical Development of Public Opinion' in *American Journal of Sociology*, 55(1950) pp. 376-388.
- TARDE, Gabriel (1880/1903), *The Laws of Imitation*. Trans. Elsie CLEWS PARSONS. New York, Henry Holt.
- TARDE, Gabriel (1901/1989), *L'opinion et la foule*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
- VAN GINNEKEN, Jaap (1992), *Crowds, Psychology and Politic: 1871-1899*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- WOLF, Kurt (ed.) (1950), *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Glencoe, Free Press, pp. 85-177.
- WYATT, Robert, Joohan KIM, Elihu KATZ (2000), 'Bridging the Spheres: Political and Personal Conversation in Public and Private Spaces' in *Journal of Communication*, 50(2000)1, pp. 71-92.

#### Notes

- 1.This is one of a series of overlapping papers seeking to develop appropriate concepts for treating the social implications of new media technologies. Previously published papers include Katz (1992), Katz (1996), Katz (1998b).
- 2.Daniel Boorstein (1964) was one of the first to make this point.
- 3.On the development of Tarde's thought, especially the transition from crowds to publics, see Clark (1969), Moscovici (1985) and van Ginneken (1992).
- 4.In the Columbia voting studies (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948), women were influenced by men, usually husbands, far more than men were influenced by women.
- 5.In one passage, Klemperer (1998) expresses surprise that Hitler's speech did *not* command attention in a public place.
- 6.There is much to be said in defence of these debates, nevertheless. See Kraus (1962).
- 7.For a discussion of what American citizens do and don't 'know,' see Delli Carpini(1996).
- 8.Several studies seriously dispute Putnam's generalization that there is a decline in organizational membership in the United States. Nevertheless, his thesis has attracted widespread interest, and 'sounds' convincing to many.
- 9.Michael Schudson (1998) and other theorists are less concerned over the decline in citizen participation, if there is one. They believe that representative democracy locates political debate where it belongs, in the parliament, and that citizens should oversee the performance of their representatives and give support, or withdraw it, at the polls.