



From the City's Borders to the Screen's Borders: Social Life and Publicness

Kentin Sınırlarından Ekranın Sınırlarına: Toplumsal Yaşam ve Kamusalılık

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ÖZ

Bu çalışmada, insanın yaratıcı etkinliği olarak iletişim, sınırlar çizen ve sınırları aşındıran işleviyle ele alınarak, iletişim etkinliği, insanın kendisini, fiziksel çevresini ve toplumsal varlığını inşa etme yönüyle değerlendirilmiştir. İnsanın üretici etkinliğinin bir uzantısı olarak semboller üretme ve ürettiği semboller yoluyla etkileşim kurma şekli, tarihsel-toplumsal etmenler ışığında sürekli değişim göstermiştir. Bunun paralelinde, üretici insan etkinliğinin bir başka yansıması olarak kentlerin iletişim süreciyle karşılıklı ilişkisi bulunmaktadır. İletişim ve kent olgusunun tarih boyunca geçirdiği değişim, Richard Sennett'in "içerisi", "dışarı" ve "kamusallık" kavramları ekseninde çözümlenmiştir. Konu, tarihsel olgulardan hareket ederek, modernlik ve modernite uğrağıyla tamamlanarak incelenmiştir. İncelemede kullanılan kavramlar ışığında, mekânsal bir tanım olarak "içerisi" öznel ve özel olanla ilişkiliyken, "dışarı" kamusallıkla bağıntılıdır. "İçerisi"nin baskın olduğu kentsel ve toplumsal süreçler, özel ve öznel olanı öne çıkartırken, "dışarı" örselenmekte ve kamusallık yitme uğramaktadır. Yansız olarak değerlendirilemeyecek olan iletişim teknolojilerinin ve araçlarının örgütlenme yapısı, mevcut toplumsal düzenle ilişkili biçimde, "içeri" vurgularken özel ve öznel olana seslenmekte, bireyi ve bireyciliği pekiştirmektedir. Bunun karşısında iletişim teknolojileri ve araçları "dışarının" önemsizleştirilmesi, kamusalığın ve kolektivitinin aşınmasına yol açmaktadır. İnsan, kamusal ve görünür kılınma iddiasıyla bireyselleştirirken, aynı zamanda tektipleştirilmektedir. Toplumsal yaşam, özel alanda kendini ifşa ve teşhir etmeyi teşvik ederken, kamusal alan sadece zevkin, narsisizmin sahnesine indirgenerek kamusalılık silikleştirilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kentsellik, dijital iletişim, kamusalılık.

ABSTRACT

In this study, communication—as a form of human creative activity—is examined in terms of its dual function of establishing boundaries and eroding them; the act of communication is evaluated in terms of how it shapes the individual, their physical environment, and their social existence. As an extension of human productive activity, the way in which humans produce symbols and interact through the symbols they produce has undergone constant change in light of historical and social factors. Parallel to this, there is a reciprocal relationship between cities and the communication process, which serves as another reflection of productive human activity. The changes that the phenomena of communication and the city have undergone throughout history have been analyzed through the lens of Richard Sennett's concepts of "interior," "exterior," and "publicness". The topic has been examined by drawing on historical phenomena and concluding with the juncture of modernity and modernism. In light of the concepts used in the study, "interior"—as a spatial definition—is associated with the subjective and private, while "exterior" is linked to the public sphere. Urban and social processes in which the "interior" predominates emphasize the private and subjective, while the "exterior" is marginalized and publicness is dissolved. The organizational structure of communication technologies and media—which cannot be evaluated impartially—emphasizes the "interior" while appealing to the private and subjective, thereby reinforcing the individual and individualism in a manner linked to the existing social order. Conversely, communication technologies and media lead to the trivialization of the "exterior," resulting in the erosion of the public sphere and collectivity.

Keywords: Urbanity, digital communication, public sphere.

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"The paradox of visibility and isolation, which has become such a major concern in modern public life, stems from the right to remain silent within the public sphere that took shape over the last century" (Sennett, 2013, p. 46).

Defining humanity as a species has long been an endeavor sought after in the history of thought and addressed in various ways. In line with this endeavor, the acceptance of humans as thinking, conscious, designing, and—thereby—producing beings capable of transforming nature through their production places them in a position where they not only establish their own existence but also shape their own history. However, neither the human capacity for thought, nor consciousness, nor the ability to design and produce arises spontaneously; therefore, these faculties cannot be regarded as the primary determinants. Rather, it is the material conditions that determine human capacity in every sphere and the processes that develop from them (Marx, 2010, p. 30; Ollman, 2006, pp. 16–39). In this study, human beings—recognized as social beings—will be examined in relation to communicative and spatiality; they will be analyzed within the context of the disappearance of the public sphere, drawing on Richard Sennett's understanding of architectural design and urban planning, which is centered on the concepts of "interior," "exterior," and "public sphere."

Within Sennett's theoretical and conceptual framework, his comparison of "interior," "exterior," "private," and "public"—in relation to social existence, urban reality, and urban experience—creates a vibrant arena for discussion regarding modern life practices. As a result of the gradual narrowing of the "exterior" and the public sphere alongside modernity and modern life, the "interior" has become a cradle of introversion, fantasy, and subjectivity, while simultaneously serving as a refuge for individuality and individualism. In contrast, although the "exterior" appears to be expanding physically, it is eroding the public sphere within a context of social contraction. As a result, people in contemporary city centers are adopting an increasingly cautious attitude toward the exterior, leading to a distinct trend toward introversion and withdrawal into the private sphere.

The current communication environment, characterized by the elevation of the "interior" and the trivialization of the "exterior," acts as a catalyst that accelerates this process. While the "interior's" suppression by the "exterior" necessitates a rethinking of the boundaries between the two, it also encourages reflection on the erosion of the public sphere and new forms of sociality. This article will explore the boundaries of the media topography within the context of urbanity, focusing on the boundaries and transitions between the "interior" and the "exterior," following a historical trajectory and examining social and political phenomena. The topic will be addressed using a qualitative descriptive research design. By the nature of this

research design, it will not include a hypothesis to be tested or research questions seeking answers. Instead, in accordance with the characteristic features of qualitative research, an intellectual activity based on inference and critique within a theoretical framework will be carried out in light of conceptual interpretations and evaluations. Given its descriptive nature, the study will examine how phenomena, events, and developments emerge, and communication activities will be analyzed from this perspective (Geray, 2017, p. 66; Erdoğan, 2003, p. 138).

Symbols, Communication, and Limitations

It is possible to state that the most fundamental characteristic distinguishing humans from other living species is their ability to communicate. From ancient thought to communication studies conducted within the modern university system, there are numerous studies that discuss and substantiate this proposition in various forms. Within the category of definitions aimed at identifying human qualities, humans have been described by some thinkers —as is commonly done—as “homo sapiens” (a thinking being), “homo symbolicum” (a being that uses symbols), and “homo loquens” (a speaking being) (Şenel, 2006, pp. 10–12). Based on these definitions, it appears possible to describe humans as beings who communicate in various ways through their intellectual activity.

On the other hand, it is known that communication is not unique to the human species; other living beings in nature—from animals to plants—also possess highly complex communication abilities and patterns. However, as centuries of debate on the phenomenon of communication have shown, the way the human species communicates differs in one respect from that of other living beings in nature. This difference can be summarized as follows: creating images and forming imagination as mental representations; concretizing them by constructing symbols; making them permanent through concretization; and, ultimately, building culture through this process. Giving sound a specific form to produce speech and conversation can be considered the starting point of this entire journey. Furthermore, tens of thousands of years after first appearing on Earth, humans discovered that speech was not the only way to encode and convey what is not “here” and “now,” and that other possibilities existed. All these discoveries inherent in culture can enable us to understand human existence and define it comprehensively: “Humans are social animals that systematically create and use material and symbolic tools” (Şenel, 2006, p. 13). Thus, humans can be defined as beings who communicate in ways distinct from other living creatures and, through this, construct their social existence.

In a historical era where everything is collective, a sociality in which concepts, boundaries, and definitions such as “private,” “intimate,” “public”—in a form of sociality where such concepts, borders, and definitions—at least in their current form—do not exist, caves—which served as the first shelters, the space for vital needs and the means of survival—have become, in current terms, stages or plat-

forms for communication. Research and discoveries have revealed that the existence of these stages or platforms extends almost continuously back to earlier periods of history. Until recently, in many art history books and works on the history of communication, the findings considered to be the oldest cave paintings were those at the Lascaux Cave in Europe, dated to around 22.000 B.C. Subsequent discoveries have pushed this date even further back; the paintings in the Chauvet Cave, dating to around 30.000 BCE, have been recorded as the oldest known examples. In studies conducted in recent years, cave paintings in Southeast Asia have been uncovered that may date back as far as 50.000 years (Ertuğrul, 2024). It is important to remember that these creations—which can be mentioned in a single sentence or read in a single breath—span tens of thousands of years and reflect human creativity and specific forms of social organization.

When we examine the sediment of this tens-of-thousands-of-years-old accumulation, it may be possible to find the visual and conceptual traces of writing, the printing press, photography, and cinema. Various theories have been put forward to explain the reasons behind the creation of prehistoric paintings, including mimesis, magic, a form of educational practice, socialization, and acculturation. Alongside—and even beyond—all these possibilities, one must not overlook the role these paintings play in highlighting not only the human power of imagination but also the drawing of certain boundaries within life and the permeability or rigidity of those boundaries. The interior of the cave as a space and the exterior of the cave as another space carry different implications—not only physically but also conceptually and sensorially; the boundary between the interior and exterior of the cave is both made distinct and eroded through communication. For example, based on the paintings in the Chauvet Cave, herds of rhinoceroses are depicted running outside the cave, across grasslands and deep within the forest. Indeed, the rhinos' heads and horns are depicted with an extraordinary effect designed to reinforce the impression of movement, thereby enhancing the fidelity of their running. It would not be entirely unfounded to seek the foundations of the concept of moving images here. In reality, the human is inside the cave while the rhinoceros is outside; although the interior and exterior of the cave are separated by a sharp physical boundary, the rhinoceros—through imagery and symbolism, and thanks to human imagination and creativity—has broken through the boundaries of space and time to be included within; the exterior also exists the interior, and of course, the interior is also exterior. The interior and the exterior are not opposites but rather complementary extensions of one another. It may be possible to find here the symbolic tools and human existence mentioned in the statement defining humanity as a being.

The path that began with cave paintings has, thousands of years later, turned toward writing and the alphabet at the crossroads of civilization. This form of symbolization—which first emerged as pictographic writing and had speech as its precursor—developed into phonetic writing, or, to put it another way, a technology that represents speech (Ong, 2007), thereby profoundly altering the boundaries

of space and time. The emergence of writing also influenced the relationship between thought and space. Thanks to writing, thought was spared from evaporating into the past; as Ong observed, it became anchored to space and thus gained permanence and durability. The strong connection between thought, writing, and space was also reflected in the earliest forms of symbolization. Joseph Rykwert notes that the symbol —which can be rendered as “nywt” in Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs—is one of the earliest indicators of the word “city” and of urban existence (Sennett, 1999, p. 65, citing Rykwert, 1988). Sennett explains a planning principle that has left its mark on today's cities as well, noting that the circle—one of the symbol's elements—represents city walls or a similar enclosed space through its unbroken form and closed nature, while the + symbol inside the circle symbolizes life and development within the enclosed space: “Intersecting lines symbolize the simplest way to define boundaries by laying out streets in a grid pattern” (p. 65). In this way, “interior” and “exterior” begin to be grasped through boundaries, finding their meaning within a broad social context; this process of demarcation permeates all aspects of social life—including the city and communication—under capitalist modernity, taking shape as its *modus operandi*.

If we continue to seek the historical and intellectual transformations of the modern world within ancient society—particularly along the axis of the development of Western thought—looking to Ancient Greece may offer valuable insights. In Ancient Greece, too, while the “interior” and the “exterior” were distinct from one another, they were not entirely disconnected. The agora, serving as the venue for citizens' actions of all “public” nature—primarily economic and political—occupied a central position in social life. If the agora, with its public, social, or collective nature, is considered “exterior,” one might assume that, as its counterpart, a “private” or “intimate” space must exist “interior.” The “interior,” as the opposite of the “exterior,” was defined by the word *oikos*, which in Ancient Greece meant “home.” Although the home or household, as the “interior,” is distinct from the “exterior,” it is not isolated; in this sense, it holds unique significance; *oikos* is almost a prerequisite for an ideal polis. If we recall that the etymological roots of words commonly used today—such as “economy” and “ecology”—and the scientific fields named after them lie in “*oikos*”, it becomes easier to grasp the concept of wholeness rather than fragmentation, and thus the nature of the public sphere. In this context, recalling Aristotle's definition of “*Zoon Politikon*” reveals that the boundary between the interior and the exterior must be understood not as one being severed from the other to make one dominant, but rather as a framework in which they mutually produce one another.

As with all creations, language—which signifies interaction through symbols—is not independent of material reality and social relations; it cannot be positioned as a determining factor in and of itself. However, if the linguistic expression of facts, events, and processes is considered an extension of the system of social relations, it may become easier to clarify the projection of the collective imagination; of course, this entire process cannot be considered separately from relations

of property and power. Over a period of approximately 10.000 years, a world in which private property and the associated social relations emerged has shaped not only the infrastructure but also the entire superstructure. As institutions of the superstructure—law, religion, language, and culture—have been molded by the material reality based on private property, they have taken on a form consistent with it. At a moment when a social structure based on private property had become fully institutionalized, both politically and sociologically, the three institutions of the superstructure—religion, law, and language—took shape in response to the need for “borders,” according to the given circumstances. In the Roman Empire—which occupies a significant place in history and where the practice of political organization became centralized and institutionalized various disputes over boundaries could arise among landowners. Since these disputes, rooted in the private property system, must not cast a shadow over the continuity of the social structure, there was a need to determine where the boundaries of lands began and ended, and the superstructure responded to this need in a manner consistent with the infrastructure. The Roman god Terminus was responsible for determining where lands began and ended. The shadow of the god Terminus manifested itself on earth through his image on boundary stones called “Termin,” erected around the lands; he regulated property relations (Aksoy, 2022, p. 34) and imbued this demarcation with a sense of sacredness. As Madsen (2021) notes, this understanding of boundary demarcation—which was conflict-free and bloodless but based on an ideologically internalized consensus—was perpetuated each February, at the end of the ancient Roman calendar, through ceremonies called Terminalia and the bloodless sacrificial rituals performed during them. However, if one of the boundary stones were destroyed, moved, or removed, the perpetrator faced certain death.

While the social structure based on private property persisted, with the change in the property regime—the transition from a slave-owning society to feudalism—a conception of a single god who sees, watches over, controls, and directs everything emerged, replacing the many gods previously responsible for various acts and actions. This change in the superstructure, of course, materialized as a reflection of the change in the infrastructure; it was completed by the gradual decline and eventual collapse of slave-owning society, followed by the emergence of feudal society. In ancient societies, including Rome, the collapse of the slave-owning social order also eliminated polytheistic belief systems, establishing the concept of a single god as dominant, thereby spreading Christianity throughout Europe.

The dominance of Christianity shaped not only many aspects of life but also the principles of urban design, forming the foundation of the concept of boundaries that extends all the way to modern social life. Sennett (1999), noting the nearly absolute determinism of Christian influence at the core of Western civilization and urban planning principles, defines the underlying motif as the “fear of openness.” In this vein, the boundary between the interior and the exterior permeates the very cells of the urb, becoming the fundamental determinant. As the exterior became

increasingly frightening to people who were turning interior, the “spiritual world”—for those seeking refuge in the physical reality of the home and the church—became a safe haven against this sense of unease. As streets—lined with such houses scattered side by side—intersect haphazardly, people collide with the majestic masses of suddenly appearing religious structures and surrender to the spiritual. In the exterior—perceived as uncanny due to its near-total absence of restrictive moral norms—pain, the sufferer, and the act of bearing witness to pain have all taken on new forms. When one steps outside, one may bear witness to suffering, but this witnessing does not necessarily lead to empathy and, consequently, solidarity. It is possible to approach visible suffering with tolerance; it is also possible to derive a kind of pleasure from it, or for suffering to become a spectacle simply because it appears intriguing. However, when moving from the exterior to the interior, the walls of the sacred have made suffering visible through the “duty of mercy,” thereby both visualizing and concretizing morality through space (Sennett, 1999, pp. 27–36).

Within this moral framework, it was believed that the grandeur of spatiality and the way it was visualized had to be vast enough to create a chasm between it and the earthly, “primitive and modest” places where ordinary people lived their daily lives (Gombrich, 1999, p. 171). The “interior”—where humans construct not only their biological existence but also their intellectual and sensory existence, in other words, where they bring their inner world into being—and the “exterior” have been systematically isolated and demarcated from one another.

In his book “The Story of Art”, Erich Gombrich (1997) explains the relationship between changes in architectural style and the earthly and the heavenly in light of changes in church architecture. The architectural style inherited from Rome designed the church in a heavy, somber, and dignified style, creating a “heavenly church”; but by the 12th century, this style gave way to a new one that it had also inspired: the “idea of the Earthly Church,” which “offered a refuge against the terrible assaults of evil,” emerged (Gombrich, p. 188). The church walls, from which “everything heavy, worldly, or unbeautiful” had been eliminated, “consisted of stained-glass windows that shimmered like rubies and emeralds (...) The devout person who surrendered to the inner contemplation of all this beauty felt that he was drawing closer to understanding the mystery of realms beyond the material world” (Gombrich, p. 189). Although the stylistic shift in religious architecture reflects theological understanding to a certain extent, it cannot be argued that a major change occurred regarding isolation and fragmentation in people's daily lives.

This entire framework offers a certain trajectory regarding the understanding of the phenomenon of communication within the historical period under consideration. Perreault (2016, p. 16) argues that, in the early Middle Ages, thinking about communication was a religious endeavor and that this endeavor was shaped around the relationship with God. It can be said that at the center of this

thought lay the idea of reaching God—even if not physically. Elaborating on his argument by referencing the views of Christian Western theologians such as Jean Scot Erigène and Abbé Suger, Perreiault summarizes that the divine is identified with light, that the entire universe is imbued with God's light, and that particular sources of light are understood as manifestations of God's universal existence. Therefore, light is necessary to bring humanity into communion with God, and religious structures must be designed and constructed in accordance with this fundamental purpose. "The problem of mediation will arise through these concepts (claritas) where material light (lumen) meets spiritual light (lux)" (Perreiault, p. 16).

Perreiault, who argues that the concrete manifestation of this quest and orientation can be found in the Basilica of Saint-Denis—built by Abbé Suger in the 12th century—states that the purpose of this structure was "to expose the faithful to the light (claritas); to dazzle their eyes with the (lux), the flame of thick church candles (ignis), and the glitter of gold reflecting off them" (p. 16). It can be argued that this archaic principle and mechanism—though operating on a different theological plane—conditions the individual's existence and communication within capitalist society. In an adapted form of this principle, as humans turn inward and withdraw into themselves, it can be argued that those who design religious structures also guide communication activities, just as they do in civil architecture and urban design. The trajectory of communication technologies—along with the economic, political, and cultural order in which technology flourishes—constantly exposes the human being—in the position of both subject and object—to light; light, radiance, and reflection are becoming the fundamental issues of material practice. The hyper-transparency of the overexposed human gives rise to an illusion; this illusion, intersecting with social opacity, produces a sociological, political, and cultural fracture stripped of publicness and sociality. The ancient distinction between interior and exterior, combined with technological development in capitalist society and the technological dominance stemming from economic-political factors, creates a sense of continuity. Spatial organization, architectural design, and urban planning, when combined with communication processes, patterns, and technologies, render the boundaries between private and public spaces permanent. To deepen this analysis, it would be useful to trace the dissolution of the public sphere, to conduct this tracing by following the trajectory of the establishment of capitalist modernity, and then to concretize it by synthesizing it with the phenomenon of communication.

Modern Spaces, Boundaries, and the Disappearance of the Public Sphere

Human existence—psychological, sociological, political, and cultural—as a social agent has long been a subject addressed in the worlds of science, thought, and artistic creation, yielding a wealth of works. This endeavor across various disciplines and fields has taken shape through approaches, perspectives, and methods

that differ in many respects. At the dawn of modernity and modernism, Descartes separated the mind from the body. The mind is a substance that occupies no space-time yet still exists, while the body is a mechanism that occupies space-time; the mind and body materialize by converging in the brain. Thus, it can be said that this opposition creates the point of collision between the interior and the exterior. The centuries that have passed since the time when Descartes' thought resonated coincide with the formation of the institutional and theoretical framework of modernity and modernism, as defined by the prevailing social conditions. The splendor of capitalist civilization goes hand in hand with its barbarism, presenting a sequence virtually unseen in any historical phase or formation that preceded it. The transformation of the means of production and the development of productive forces, along with the immense increase in production capacity, have also radically altered human and social relations, institutions, patterns, and habits. Cities—which serve as a labor pool, a market, and a production hub, where the arteries of capitalism converge—have also harbored extraordinary tensions. The capitalist city is a structure that is much more densely populated, much faster-paced, and much more dynamic in its rhythm. Cities shaped by the Industrial Revolution—especially metropolises—are now the centers of life; consequently, extraordinary waves of migration have occurred from the countryside, villages, and small towns to these urban centers.

The conditions in question have driven people to seek shelter, and that shelter has once again become a refuge. It is clear that this search requires drawing a boundary between the exterior and the interior. However, if we examine this more closely, what are the concrete conditions that fuel the desire for and need for the “interior,” beyond the mere shelter? Sennett (2013) clarifies these conditions by exploring the concepts of “home” and “refuge.” As the Industrial Revolution gave rise to new concerns stemming from changing social relationships, a foundation was needed to articulate these issues—and it was precisely for this reason that the “home” became a refuge. Sennett likens the home, as a refuge, to “a monk seeking spiritual enlightenment by retreating to his cell.” He defines this quest for enlightenment as an escape from the filth of power in the world and a means of bringing everything into sharper focus, adding: “What is revealed in the sanctuary is our truth, our very self; it is the weight of the medieval past” (Sennett, 2013, p. 42). The conclusion that can be drawn from this can be summarized as follows. On the shoulders of modern society and its individuals, the historical burden accumulated from the past has been compounded by the structural impasses and burdens of the modern world; humanity has found both the confrontation with its own suffering and its salvation in turning inward—taking refuge in “spirituality,” which manifests in various forms—and in fleeing from the exterior world and the collective.

For the modern individual in capitalist society, retreating into the home has not been sufficient to clearly define the boundaries with the exterior; the person who has withdrawn has been forced to further compartmentalize the world within those four walls, isolating one part of their domestic world from another. The cur-

rent architectural order—which we have come to take for granted and assume has always existed—emerged in the 19th century alongside the concept of “the division of subjective life into duchies,” whereby each space within the home acquired a function dedicated to a specific activity, such as love, play, or communication (Sennett, 2013, p. 44). The ritualistic behaviors of today's middle-class urban life have reinforced the “private” and “subjective” spheres with extremely rigid boundaries, even within the sanctuary known as the home.

Within this framework, the design of homes—as a practice of microspatial design and organization—can be examined in relation to the forms of power in capitalist modernity. However, it is necessary to clarify the connection between this principle of micro-design—that is, the design of the interior—and macro-design—that is, the design of the exterior. Bauman (2000), using the concept of “the legibility of space,” notes that this ability to read space carries the potential to produce the sphere of hegemony of the modern state and state powers. The reorganization of space is inevitable for establishing and maintaining sovereignty, and this form of organization gives rise to a “space war.” In this war, while the government and state officials seek to establish absolute control over space, maps have served as the material means to fulfill this desire. While maps facilitate the abstraction of space, they have granted the state and government a perfect ability to interpret it, thereby rendering space impervious to interventions by the grassroots or the public—and to any form of intervention that cannot be controlled from above (Bauman, 2000, pp. 39–40).

Indeed, in modern capitalist society, maps have become one of the practical tools for preventing people from breaking down the boundaries between the “interior” and the “exterior,” from bringing their concerns into the public sphere, and from organizing; through cartography, social and political control mechanisms have been firmly established. Baron (Georges-Eugène) Haussmann's plan for Paris can be considered a typical historical example of this situation. Haussmann eliminated Paris's narrow streets and built wide boulevards lined with architecturally uniform buildings, thereby creating the image of Paris as we know it today. There were specific historical reasons that, in a sense, compelled Haussmann—and Napoleon III (Napoleon the Nephew), who appointed him—to undertake such a massive project. During the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, barricades erected in the narrow streets—which were difficult or impossible to breach—compelled the ruling class to redraw the map of Paris. Thanks to the Haussmann Plan, the authorities were able to establish control over space through the map of Paris; precisely as Bauman observed, the urban space became—if not entirely closed off—quite resistant to public intervention. The first test of the Haussmann Plan and the new map of Paris came during the Paris Commune of 1871. During the Commune, the barricades that were erected were easily dismantled, thereby making the city and society transparent to those in power and rendering the urban space largely immune to public intervention.

While urban space and society are subjected to such transparency, it is

impossible to speak of the opacity of the human being and of private/subjective space. While the mapping of the city ensures control over the exterior, can “mapping”—as a practice of spatial organization—also fulfill a function within the safe haven of the home? As mentioned above, every area within the home has now taken on a specific function and purpose of use, becoming a space for particular activities. However, it cannot be claimed that this entire approach to planning occurred haphazardly. Just as maps enable control over space by schematizing and planning terrain, area, and topography, it is conceivable that the interiors of homes can similarly be controlled through micro-mapping. Our experience contains various pieces of evidence that could corroborate this line of reasoning. In each and every society and geography permeated by the spirit of capitalism, the floor plan of an average home exhibits a high degree of similarity to one another, to a certain extent independent of the home’s size. The emergence and development of capitalism have imposed an architectural philosophy based on this similarity. Indeed, particularly in the early stages of industrial capitalism, architectural thought was shaped to mitigate the prevalence of epidemics and deaths in cities caused by unhealthy and inadequate housing conditions. At this point, it should not be forgotten that one dimension of the Haussmann plan was to create a sterile urban space. Interior spaces designated for specific activities generally exclude any other function, thereby entrenching the principle of “the compartmentalization of subjective life” that Sennett refers to. As an illustration, very few homes have a book in the kitchen; they are commonly placed in other “appropriate” parts of the home. The television is located in the living room—the home’s most prestigious room, where the domestic public gathers most extensively. In today’s middle-class homes, there are rooms set aside—and even equipped—specifically for playing video games. Thus, as a practice of micro-scale mapping, the architectural plans of homes also encourage—and even compel—people to distance themselves from the collective, to withdraw and shut themselves off, and to remain interior. On the other hand, amid the relentless and fast-paced daily cycle of modern cities, the home, as a shelter and refuge, promises an escape from all of this.

When this entire approach to planning and design combined with the dynamics of capitalism and modern society, it led to the dissolution of the public sphere. Sennett (2013) discusses the “decline of the public man” within this framework. The Industrial Revolution, changing class relations, the rise of metropolises, and the establishment of modern society initially allowed, if only temporarily, for the thick veil covering the public sphere to be lifted. The emergence and usage of the term “cosmopolitan” stand among the indicators of this changing social landscape. The first individuals of modernity, freed from the influence of both religion and kings, saw the armor of elitism shattered—from pastimes to fill their leisure time to patterns of cultural consumption—allowing people who did not know or resemble one another to come together in the metropolis. This trend also created the possibility of taking a step toward the public sphere and pushing subjectivity and privacy into the background. With the 19th century, we witness the relatively

distinct form of the public sphere—which had briefly emerged—fade once again. As a result of the Industrial Revolution, mass production expanded the scale of both production and consumption, leading to homogenization in a manner consistent with the nature of this expanding scale within capitalist logic. Homogenization, in turn, eliminated the potential for the public sphere, while the private and the subjective were once again emphasized. Urban space, the urban experience, and social practice became synonymous with consumption (Sennett, 2013, pp. 37–46).

The glue that connects the 19th-century Parisian passages—first lit by kerosene and later by electricity—to today's massive shopping malls is the practice of consumption. Throughout the process of biological and cultural evolution, humans have been producers as well as, of course, consumers. However, consumption in modern society differs from other social forms and stages; it is now grounded not only in need but also in desire—one must desire in order to consume.

Goods, services, and images must arouse desire, and to do so, they must entice potential consumers and keep that desire constantly alive; there is no visible finish line in the pursuit of new desires rather than the satisfaction of existing ones. The very notion of "limit" must have temporal and spatial dimensions. As a result of the elimination of the need to "wait to satisfy a need," the need itself has disappeared, leaving only the act of waiting (Bauman, 2000, p. 91).

Thus, the public sphere has succumbed to subjectivity, individualistic ideology, and its pursuit of pleasure—the equating of pleasure with desire, the boundlessness of desire, and its equating with consumption. The inevitable consequence of this situation finds its symptomatic expression in what Sennett (2013) defines as the "paradox of isolation." Thus, people become isolated from public life; as they become more isolated, public commons erode, dissolve, and disappear. If we accept that "the order of our time is one of disconnection" (Sennett, 2002, p. 14), we can see that cities where millions live on top of one another have succeeded in fusing the principle of order with disconnection in a single mold. Residential and commercial spaces within isolated structures capable of housing hundreds or thousands of people, shopping malls that serve as breeding grounds for every kind of consumption—from durable and non-durable goods to cultural commodities—along with streets and avenues that operate at high speed and continuously, much like a highway, yet where no one can make contact with anyone else, and the squares they connect to—which are almost merely transit points for getting from one place to another—constitute the grammar of a city from which publicness has been swept away. With the concept of frictionless capitalism, the boundaries of space have almost completely vanished today, and the public sphere has evaporated.

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall later mapped out the coordinates of this state of isolation in his works "The Silent Language" (1959) and "The Hidden Dimension"

(1966), conceptualizing the physical distance people maintain around themselves while interacting with others in daily life. According to this, people maintain and observe a certain distance from others during communicative activities, depending on the social nature of their relationship. As this expands from the inner to the outer sphere, the distance between us and other social actors widens. Hall's approach to proxemics legitimizes the normative and theoretical framework of the given.

The Screen as a Border of Publicness

While the dissolution of public and the disappearance of the public individual are assessed through urban space—as the physical arena of human activity—and the home, its basic unit, it should not be overlooked that, beginning in the 19th century, another actor has become a decisive factor in this debate. This new actor in the erosion of the public sphere is the mass media. The emphasis on “mass” in the naming of these new apparatus can be interpreted as pointing to a moment and a situation in which the public sphere has become lifeless, in relation to the understanding of the social condition.

To put it in a clichéd phrase, the communication technologies of the 19th century, which advanced at a dizzying pace, began moving toward an electronic phase with the 20th century. Throughout this process, the public function and nature of mass media have also taken on a characteristic that is sometimes highlighted and at times acquires legal status. It could be argued that the need to emphasize the public sphere is, at the same time, an illusion created by the status quo—which determines the organizational structure of mass media—to fuel subjectivity; for in a capitalist society, prioritizing the public sphere is not only impossible but also contradictory.

The emergence and widespread adoption of electronic communication have led to people retreating further into their private/personal spheres. Thus, the medium of electronic communication can be identified as among the primary contributors to the paradox of isolation. Although these have the potential to inform very large groups of people about one another and a wide variety of topics, the structural limitations associated with the current social situation act as a barrier to the public sphere. This situation does not stem from the nature of technology or the medium itself. Sennett (2013, pp. 356–368) states that technology cannot be demonized and, accordingly, means of communication cannot be defined as “devices of hell”, emphasizing that the blame for historical developments cannot be placed solely on medium of communication. First the radio, then television—and now, if we include digital medium of communication and technologies in this category as well—medium of communication encompass and reinforce the private/-subjective while excluding, limiting, and erasing the public. This outcome stems from the organizational structure of these apparatus, the inevitable relationship the audience must establish with the device as a result of this structure, and the

way in which these devices frame events. As Williams (2003) also notes, communication technologies neither emerged by chance nor are they determinative on their own; each is a product of a specific historical and social context. To reject an entire history in terms of time and space—and within this conception, to ascribe an unchanging essence to human beings and accept technology as a tool that satisfies the needs of this essence—can be regarded as an idealist inference produced by a metaphysical method (Williams, 2003, p. 107). Within this framework, medium of electronic communication—first radio and then television—have taken on the function of clarifying the boundaries between the interior and the exterior, bringing the private/subjective to the fore. The organic and holistic understanding of reality has been fragmented by the “flow”-based mode of operation of these media (pp. 17–26). “The needs met by electronic media (...) are cultural impulses toward withdrawing from social interactions in order to know and feel oneself more fully as an individual,” states Sennett (2013, p. 356). For centuries, humans have been confined to the interior—to subjectivity and the private sphere—through spatial planning and architectural design; now, they are also being confined to subjectivity and individuality through means of communication.

Developments such as the widespread adoption of television in the 1960s and the use of satellite technology were greeted with great enthusiasm, particularly by Marshall McLuhan and those who embraced his views. When McLuhan's technological determinism was combined with a techno-optimistic perspective, the belief that the world would become a paradise on earth became widespread. McLuhan prophesied that with the development of electronic communication—and television in particular—the world would become a global village. McLuhan's prophecy may also be interpreted as a challenge to the very existence of borders. However, both the proposition itself and the social conditions under which it was formulated render this challenge invalid. While McLuhan's ideas garnered a broad following in academia and intellectual milieu, the bloodiest scenes of savagery in the post-World War II era were carried out by the United States in Vietnam, and the Vietnam War took its place in history as the first war broadcast on television (Erdoğan, 1997, p. 321). This period, which saw the collapse of the narrative of a “democratic” world order that television was expected to create, was also a historical interval during which theories of the active viewer emerged and were frequently debated in the field of communication studies. Typically, the attacks in Cambodia—which must be mentioned alongside the atrocities in Vietnam—along with a series of coups and massacres carried out in many Latin American countries, and similar events in other parts of the world, all took place during an era when electronic communication was becoming widespread. It is now easy to see that the “new media,” which were met with great hope at the time of their emergence, proved incapable of resolving many local and regional problems—including these massacres. The dominance of the private sphere, the personal, and subjectivity has stifled the voice of public demands. This observation must be recorded in the inventory of the erosion of the public sphere.

The major leap following electronic media was achieved through digital technologies. The foundations of digital technology can be traced back to the 1970s, to the transition from transistors to microprocessors. The early stages of digital technology in civil society took concrete form in the 1980s with personal computers, game consoles, and audio recording software such as CDs. In the 1990s, the advancement and widespread adoption of personal computers led to the popularization of the idea of connecting these devices to one another, and the internet—or the World Wide Web—began to be used at a rapid pace around the world. Digital communication technologies developed in this way and became firmly established with the emergence of portable computing devices. The many applications and platforms that emerged alongside the spread of digital communication technologies were once again met with enthusiasm, hope, and excitement in academia, intellectual milieu, and society at large—much like at the dawn of the electronic communication era. During this period of widespread adoption of digital media, we also witnessed the strong articulation of McLuhanian approaches and the “active audience” thesis. In line with a Habermasian understanding of the public sphere, there is a strong emphasis on the democratizing qualities of digital communication technologies and media. Definitions related to the subject and the subject’s private sphere have increasingly taken on a political dimension; these definitions have emerged from the private and sacred spheres and have become increasingly politicized issues (Dahlgren, 2013, p. 145). Particularly in Western democracies, as voter turnout—the dominant form of political participation under the representative liberal model—has declined, digital communication technologies have emerged as a sort of antidote, and digital media have become the new refuge of the liberal world.

In the current era, characterised by the pervasive adoption of digital communication technologies, the complexity of issues has been increasing exponentially on a daily basis. Approximately half a century after the Vietnam War—the first war broadcast on television—numerous massacres have taken place, particularly in the Middle East (ranging from the invasion of Iraq to the genocide in Palestine). During these attacks, millions of people were slaughtered; the massacres were recorded and broadcast in all their brutality; and these images have been—and continue to be—viewed by millions of people not only on television but even more so via other devices, primarily cell phones. Virtually everywhere in the world, various forms of inequality—most notably economic inequality—prevail. The world’s natural resources are being rapidly depleted through exploitation, leading to major environmental disasters. Due to the ruling class’s mode of production and related activities, a profound climate crisis is unfolding, threatening all life—including human life. All of this is taking place within a technological landscape characterized by the extremely rapid and widespread production and dissemination of information. Despite extensive documentation of these events, humanity’s problems—and the suffering stemming from them—are not diminishing but, on the contrary, increasing. In this context, it is worth recalling an observation made in earlier

sections of this study: Human beings may not always feel disturbed by the suffering they witness, and this may prevent them from showing solidarity with those who are suffering. The cause of this situation must be sought in human existence—which is confined within private/subjective boundaries—and in the erosion of the public sphere. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer set out to explain the contradictions of modern life through the culture industry, noting that the loss of stability in objective religion is filled by the culture industry and its various products (1996, pp. 7–62). The loss of stability in objective religion continues to manifest today in a secularized guise, mediated by digital communication technologies. The individual of our age, severed from the public sphere, observes the life they live from the exterior without ever stepping outside, placing themselves at the center of this spectacle. This experience takes shape through the pursuit of individual and false salvation—sometimes under the guise of science, sometimes through pseudo-scientific methods—via personal development, life coaching, and secular-looking esoteric-spiritual fabrications.

The current media landscape, which sanctifies the individual, individualism, and the private and subjective, fundamentally defines what is “interior” and “exterior” in social life. The liberal perspective accepts the individual's existence in this form and their use of media as the new frontier of political and cultural existence. In this perspective, a conceptual framework stands out that blends the 1960s' theories of the active audience, the uses and gratifications approach, a symbolic interactionist construction of the self, and a Habermasian understanding of the public sphere (Habermas, 2015).

In this quest for liberation, digital communication technologies serve as a mediator; it is the social order in which they flourish that breathes life into them. The existing order, which suppresses collectivity and the public sphere, lavishes praise on individualism, subjectivity, and the private. The “communities” that form around the screen cannot be considered separately from the individual's lack of public experience and practice—since such individuals are unable to organize and come together—but can, at best, be viewed as a manifestation of this lack (Sennett, 2003, p. 17). In such a social order, the narcissistic psyche—to use a Freudian term—perceives its own existence as transcending and taking precedence over everything else, and all communication practices are shaped accordingly. Social media platforms—which have emerged with the development of digital communication technologies and are hailed as “islands of democracy” for supposedly opening up space for participation (and are, somewhat misleadingly, also referred to as “new media”)—constitute the current practice of the restriction of the public sphere through their operation centered on subjectivity, the private, and the individual. Social media platforms, many of which have a visually dominant architecture, represent the latest variation of this focus on the subject and the private sphere. Reality, which was once sought on television screens measured in meters and compressed onto that surface, is now sought on screen surfaces measured in centimeters. A positive correlation emerges between the narrowing of the public

sphere and the shrinking of screens. As the public shrinks, these smaller screens have become a veil for subjective, private, and individualistic representation.

The proliferation of cameras, driven by the development and widespread adoption of digital communication technologies, has turned the practice of taking and sharing one's own photos—known as “selfies”—into a common habit. As both the practice itself and the way it is named indicate, the entire fabric of social existence has now, in a way that transcends even physical boundaries, effectively surrendered to subjectivity and the private sphere. It is well known that Instagram has played a major role in the widespread adoption of this cultural practice as a habit. In 2014, more than 200 million photos shared on Instagram carried the “selfie” tag, so much so that the Oxford Dictionary selected “selfie” as its Word of the Year in 2013 (Cooper, 2026). In contemporary society, the pursuit of spiritual fulfilment and the attainment of perfection through divine intervention is a common ambition shared by many individuals. The metaphor of the light serves as a symbol of spiritual enlightenment and transcendence, akin to the spiritual quest depicted by the believer at the Basilica of St. Denis. The divine perfection he seeks and aspires to attain is himself. The narcissistic personality created by the “paradox of isolation amid visibility” (Sennett, 2013, p. 28) has given rise to a human type that is excessively staged and rendered hyper-transparent.

As capitalist civilization has become institutionalized, adding the burdens of the current social structure to the centuries-long inquiries into the nature of humanity, scientific efforts aimed at the transformation, crises, and healing of the psyche have become systematized. In this vein, the effort to formulate the subject—and its state of being both within and without—set out centuries after Descartes to follow a path reminiscent of his, giving rise to a theoretical continuity from Freud to Lacan. Those drawing from the tradition of psychoanalysis—particularly Lacan—have conceived of the human being as a creature that, once it begins to breathe in this world, can never again find serenity. According to this view, the time when a human is “whole” and “at ease” is the period spent in the womb, when they are not yet “exterior.” Once the human being emerges “into the exterior,” serenity is dissolved; especially after seeing oneself in the mirror, one fully realizes one's existence outside the womb, and the subject is thus established. In this vein, the human being before life, the living human being, and the human being after life have been interpreted through the tense relationship between consciousness and reality. The paradigm shift from utopias to dystopias is characterised by a transition from collective creative power, as embodied by the utopian ideal, to a prescription for isolation, individual solutions, collapse, and hopelessness, as typified by the dystopian paradigm.

Conclusion

Throughout history, humans have been agents who produce their own material and social existence. The reflections of this can be found in communica-

tion—as a defining characteristic of humanity—and in the cultural creations produced through communication. The act of communication, which can be defined as interaction through symbols, has been decisive in shaping the human physical environment, while at the same time being shaped by that environment. In this regard, there is a strong relationship between the means and capacities humans use to communicate and the environment in which they live. The form that the city takes as the physical environment in which people live parallels the way humans communicate; there is a reciprocal relationship between the two. However, neither can be considered a determining factor on its own; each is shaped—separately and together—according to power relations within the framework of historical and social conditions.

Digital media—and social media platforms as a specific form thereof—individualize people under the pretense of making them public and visible, thereby homogenizing them and eliminating publicness and organization. While social life encourages self-revelation and self-display in the private sphere, it isolates the public sphere by reducing it to nothing more than a stage for pleasure and narcissism. At a historical turning point where the tyranny of subjectivity (Sennett, 2013) has been proclaimed, the way forward for humanity may lie in a return to collectivity and the public sphere.

The yoke of the subjective and the private forces people to retreat into their own shells; yet this no longer occurs solely in a physical sense—people “perform” their “selves” in all their dimensions, and they do so within the topography of the media. The dominance of the subjective and the private no longer resides within the physical confines of four walls but reigns over a vast physical space on a global scale, visible to everyone. Now everyone is themselves; no one is everyone. This outcome is a result of the historical processes of the given social life.

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