Mobile Transformations of 'Public' and 'Private' Life

Mimi Sheller and John Urry

ONE OF the key dilemmas of the 20th century concerned the overwhelming power of the state and market to interfere in and to overpower 'private' life. By contrast, in the 21st century, the emerging social problem is seen as the erosion of the 'public' by processes otherwise understood to be 'private'. Thus participation in the public sphere of associational life and democratic communication has declined according to Wolfe (1989) and Putnam (2000), because commercialization and privatizing TV-watching have destroyed older feelings of solidarity and belonging to a community. The public spaces of cities, once the seedbeds of civility and social life, have been overrun by 'private cars' according to Habermas (1992), Sennett (1977) and Reclaim the Streets activists (Jordan, 1998). Private corporations have taken over once public institutions of schools, hospitals, prisons, transportation systems, postal services and the state itself, leading to a loss of democratic control, according to Nader (2000) and Klein (2000), while, according to Berlant (1997) and Bauman (2000), a politics of confessional intimacy and shaming has invaded the once public arena of political debate and arbitration of collective interests. On every front, it seems, the 'public' is being privatized, the private is becoming oversized, and this undermines democratic life.

In this article we clarify these issues, both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, we first argue that the various meanings of 'public' and 'private' must be differentiated and sorted. Some familiar conceptions of the public include ideas of public space, public sphere, public institutions, public interest, public culture, public sector, public roads, the general public and so on. Second, we show that these notions of the public rest on a separate basis and presuppose a particular contrasting 'private', yet these differences have been insufficiently recognized. Further, there is a tendency

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in the existing literature to think in terms of 'spheres' or 'spaces', concepts that are often static and 'regional' in character. We criticize such static conceptions and emphasize the increasing fluidity in terms of where (or when) moments of publicity and privacy occur. We show that the characteristic ways in which the public/private distinction has been drawn, and the overwhelming concern with the problem of 'erosion' of the public sphere or 'blurring of boundaries' between the public and the private, fail to capture the multiple mobile relationships between them, relationships that involve the complex and fluid hybridizing of public-and-private life.

We show that a sociology of mobilities (and the recognition of associated immobilities) can better explain the dynamics of the apparent 'erosion' of the boundaries of public and private life. Most importantly, we examine the flows and networks that enable mobility between and across publics and privates. These mobilities are physical (in the form of mobile people, objects and hybrids of humans-in-machines), and informational (in the form of electronic communication via data, visual images, sounds and texts). It is also shown that informational systems are increasingly mobile, embedded in various gadgets and especially involving processes of screening. Rather than a straightforward 'colonization' of the public sphere by private interests, there is we argue a more complex de-territorialization of publics and privates, each constantly shifting and being performed in rapid flashes within less anchored spaces.

Nevertheless, we suggest that the new hybrids of private-in-public and public-in-private do not automatically imply a decline in politics or a collapse of democracy, but may instead point to a proliferation of multiple 'mobile' sites for potential democratization. Changes in democratic possibility that are usually related to macro-structural trends in the 'globalization' of markets and states are, we conclude, also tied into these everyday forms of dwelling in mobility and screen-mediated communications.

Multiple Publics and Privates

First then, we note that the category of 'public' is very familiar but its varied bases have been insufficiently recognized and social scientists have not adequately distinguished between them (but see Emirbayer and Sheller, 1999; Weintraub, 1997). And while some theorists have pointed out that rather than a singular public sphere there are in fact multiple publics (Cohen and Arato, 1992; Fraser, 1992), few have considered whether there might also be multiple 'privates'.

Social scientists and political theorists use the terms 'public' and 'private' in many, often contradictory, ways. Weintraub notes that 'different sets of people who employ these concepts mean very different things by them – and sometimes, without quite realizing it, mean several things at once' (1997: 1–2). He refers to four major approaches: the liberal-economistic model, the republican virtue (and classical) model, the 'sociability' or dramaturgic approach, and finally a range of feminist critiques/analyses. Emirbayer and Sheller (1999) have also pointed to the multiple contours of

concepts of the public sphere oriented in different ways toward the economic, the political and the civil. Here we will also elaborate, not only some of the different conceptions of the public, but also the existing bases in social and political thought for various conceptions of the 'private'.

Some important conceptions of the public and private are set out in Table 1, indicating the differing meanings as well as some different ways in which the boundary is drawn. We will now consider these various notions, including how each perspective identifies a different form of blurring or erosion of the public/private boundary.

The first public/private distinction focuses on the boundary between the market and the state, of private *interests* versus public interests, or the private sector versus the public sector. Here the state is presumed to operate in the public interest, while economic actors pursue their own 'private' interests as calculating individuals or profit-maximizing corporations. Referring to this as the liberal-economistic model, Weintraub notes that 'this orientation defines public/private issues as having to do with striking a balance between individuals and contractually created organizations, on the one hand, and state action on the other' (1997: 8). Here the forms of inclusion and exclusion on either side of the boundary are state-determined; that is, they are grounded in law, contract, and the recognition of property and subjects before the law as either private or public. The private realm is predominantly economic in origins, motivation and orientation: it is about free markets (versus governmental hierarchies), Smith's 'invisible hand' (versus Hobbes's Leviathan) or capitalism (versus state socialism).

From a neo-liberal point of view, the public is seen to have become over-extended into affairs that ought to be the concern of private sector interests. Thus many neo-liberals call for privatization of state-owned sectors, deregulation of business, cuts in taxation and extension of free trade agreements as an appropriate response to the state overstepping its proper boundaries. Others concerned with the 'public interest' argue that private economic interests are overwhelming the public realm, and undermining the common good, which the state is meant to represent and protect. In neo-Marxist approaches private economic interests always pose a fundamental threat to the public good and must be closely regulated and controlled. This is particularly apparent in critiques of the world financial institutions and of the operations of 'global' or transnational corporations in the Third World (Mies, 1989; Shiva, 1989). Nader excoriates the corporate take-over of American politics through the funding of political parties, lobbying and a tightly controlled two-party system (see 2000; http://www.nader.org/opeds.html). Likewise, Klein's *No Logo* is *inter alia* concerned with the 'erosion of noncorporate space' and 'the privatisation of public space' (2000: 131, 156). Today we are left with only 'a vast gray area of pseudo-public private spaces' (Klein, 2000: 183), which have been sold to corporations, branded and gutted of the rights associated with citizenship.

In the second branch of social and political theory the public *sphere* is viewed as a space of rational debate and open communication mediating

Table 1 Diverse Publics and Privates

Public	**Private**	**Meaning of the public/private distinction**	**Forms of inclusion/exclusion and exemplary theorists**
Public interest	Private interest	It is presumed that states operate at least in part to fulfil the public interest (via public sector institutions) which would not be met by those pursuing private interests, whether they are individuals, families or large corporations (all private-sector institutions)	State-determined legal boundaries and procedural rules R. Nader, K. Ohmae
Public sphere	Private sphere	The public sphere, where open and rational debate can take place, is the social space that lies between the state, on the one hand, and the private sphere of family life and economic relations, on the other	Voluntaristic civil-associational ties and boundaries J. Cohen and A. Arato, S. Benhabib
Public life	Private life	Public life takes place within politics, the workplace, religion, education and other public spaces, as opposed to private life which is seen as occurring within the domestic realm	Social-relational networks C. Pateman, R. Putnam
Public space	Private space	Public spaces are those areas and locales, especially in towns and cities, outside the private spaces of the home and workplace, where people can congregate, socialize and organize in relatively unregulated ways	Physical and symbolic marking of spatial boundaries R. Sennett, J. Meyerowitz
Publicity	Privacy	Publicity involves the bringing of private relationships into the public domain, through 'exposure' in various media (radio, print, TV, Internet); privacy implies a right to non-exposure	Mass-mediated exposure L. Berlant, Z. Bauman

between the state and the private sphere of family life and economic relations. The private sphere is seen as part of civil society from which potential solidarity, equality and public participation can arise. Thus inclusion or exclusion from the public sphere occurs through the self-organization of social actors into associations that can act publicly or speak as the 'private citizens come together as a public'. Cohen and Arato refer to privacy as 'a domain of individual self-development and moral choice' (1992: 346), rather than simply as a realm of private economic interests. Such a view of the private also occurs within the civic republican tradition, which is largely concerned with the relation between the individual and the state, and subsumes private economic interests within a broader definition of a solidaristic civil society. Together these normative approaches can be thought of as defining a kind of 'political private'; the individual emerges as private citizen in relation to the state and ideally participates in a public sphere of communication, equality and deliberation.

From this perspective the crucial problem of boundary blurring concerns the relation between civil society and both state and market. As developed by Habermas, this was expressed as the 'colonization' of the life-world (and the realm of communication) by the system logics of economic commodification and state bureaucratization. This work addressed the ways in which economic private interests threaten the political public, as well as how the public power of the state threatens the civil private. Various post-Habermasians have extended this argument, advocating for example the institutionalization of the 'right to privacy' which is protected by law and rests on a self-limitation of the state (Cohen, 1997; Cohen and Arato, 1992). As Benhabib argues:

> The public sphere of democratic legitimacy has shrunk. . . . The autonomous citizen, whose reasoned judgement and participation was the *sine qua non* of the public sphere, has been transformed into the 'citizen consumer' of packaged images and messages, or the 'electronic mail target' of large lobbying groups and organizations. The impoverishment of public life has been accompanied by the growth of the society of surveillance and voyeurism on the one hand (Foucault) and the 'colonization of the lifeworld' on the other (Habermas). (1992: 112)

Benhabib calls for a discourse ethics in which distinctions 'such as those between justice and the good life, norms and values, interests and needs . . . are renegotiated, reinterpreted, and rearticulated as a result of a radically open and procedurally fair discourse' (1992: 110). The private can then remain distinct from the public, but in self-reflexive 'post-conventional' ways that do not depend on gender hierarchies. As Young argues, 'The feminist slogan "The personal is political" suggests that no persons, actions, or attributes of persons should be excluded from public discussion and decision-making, although the self-determination of privacy must nevertheless remain' (1998: 424). In these feminist approaches there is a strategic

slippage between the idea of a legally protected 'private sphere' and the more personalistic notions of 'private life' and 'private space'.

Indeed, a third approach understands the private as more fundamentally rooted in private *life* and delineated by private *space*, in which the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion revolve around social relations and physical and symbolic demarcations between different spaces (Sennett, 1977). This is the private sphere pertaining to the domestic, the familial, the personal, the bodily and the intimate inner world of the individual (Ariès and Duby, 1989; Elias, 1982). Privacy is viewed as much as a spatial arrangement as a social one, and is something marked off from the 'public spaces' of streets, parks and plazas (Weintraub, 1997: 17–25). This model of privacy also pertains to feminist approaches, which refer to everything outside the household as 'public', including economic institutions such as the workplace or corporations, *and* political institutions of the state *and* public spaces. A key concern here is with the exclusion of women from this array of public realms (Fraser, 1992; Pateman, 1989; Phillips, 1991).

Again there are several kinds of concern with the erosion of the public/private boundary. Some radical feminist theory rejects the notion of a separate private realm by highlighting the unavoidable intervention of the modern welfare state in the supposedly 'non-political' realms of the family, sexuality, child-rearing, control of one's body and so on (Pateman, 1998). Also relevant here is the shift from 'private patriarchy' to a new kind of 'public patriarchy' as women in many European societies have increasingly moved from the 'confines' of the 'private' household into the 'public' workplace and state institutions (Walby, 1990). Yet for others, the key problem in modern societies is the unravelling of traditional communities and associational practices. Putnam argues that this diminution of social activities and community ties has led to a decline of the 'social capital', which is necessary for a robust democratic society (2000).

Finally here, there is analysis of the media and forms of mass-mediated publicity in relation to questions of privacy. The Frankfurt School's critique of the mass media first identified how their increasing commodification undermined democratic communication and weakened citizenship. Foucauldians are concerned with the forms of surveillance and power which infiltrate the most 'private' realms of the family, the body and sexuality. This suggests that the very notion of a 'separate' private realm is an illusion in the first place, and the apparent boundary only exists so that state power can be exercised over bodies. At a more everyday level, there has been much publicity surrounding the media's invasion of the 'private' lives of public figures (see Richards et al., 1999). Media exposure transgresses the symbolic boundary that once kept such 'private' matters and people's personal lives hidden from public scrutiny.

Berlant understands privacy as a 'category of law', but investigates how a conjunction of 'sexuality, mass culture, and mass nationality' has displaced national citizenship within the US (1997). She suggests that 'conservative ideology has convinced a citizenry that the core context of

politics should be the sphere of private life'; this privatization of citizenship means that 'there is no public sphere in the contemporary United States' (Berlant, 1997: 3). In contrast to the accounts above (though still concerned with the 'impoverishment of public life' in contemporary society), this 'infantile' discourse of the citizen can be understood as the civil private posing a threat to the political public. Bauman similarly argues:

> The 'public' is colonized by the 'private'; 'public interest' is reduced to curiosity about the private lives of public figures, and the art of public life is narrowed to the display of private affairs and public confessions of private sentiments (the more intimate the better). (2000: 37)

Thus a more careful differentiation between distinctive understandings of the private and the public allows for a better reading of the multiple issues apparently raised by the erosion of the boundary between the two categories. There are many different kinds of 'erosion', pertaining to changes in legality and regulation, in civil institutions and associational ties, in uses of public space and the media. However, all such writers maintain an adherence to what we have referred to as a static version of the divide between the public and the private. Is it still useful (or even possible) to maintain the boundary between a public and a private sphere? Can public interests and private interests be effectively separated? How can privacy and publicity be disentangled in the glare of media exposure? To address these questions, we argue, social theory will need to develop a more dynamic conceptualization of the fluidities and mobilities that have increasingly hybridized the public and private.

Moving Within and Between the Public and Private

We now turn to our own analysis of the links between these transformational processes, suggesting that the changing forms of physical and informational mobility that uproot bodies from place and information from space are key. The existing literature has been overly static and regional in its thinking, whatever distinction is drawn between the public and private domains. We show that cars, information, communications, screens, are all material worlds, hybrids of private and public life. Despite the heroic efforts of 20th-century normative theorists to rescue the divide, the various distinctions between public and private domains cannot survive. The critical theorists reviewed above each in different ways diagnosed the erosion of boundaries between public and private as the cause of democratic decline; maintaining or restoring the boundary, they imply, is crucial to the continuance of democratic citizenship in the contemporary world. We argue, in contrast, that the hybridization of public and private is even more extensive than previously thought, and is occurring in more complex and fluid ways than any regional model of separate spheres can capture. Any hope for public citizenship and democracy, then, will depend on the capacity to navigate these new material, mobile worlds that are neither public nor private. In

what follows we explore how mobilities are central to the reconstitution of publicity and privacy with far-reaching implications for the future of citizenship.

We begin our analysis first with civil society that is typically thought of as located within specific physical places (Cohen and Arato, 1992). Conceptually, it has been rooted in specific spatial zones of public sociality and at most involving connection through newspapers and the imagined communities of 'print publics' (Anderson, 1991). The power of civil society crucially depends on the 'space' between these public and private 'spheres'. Arendt, for example, located the origins of the public sphere in the Ancient Greek *polis*, based around the meeting of private citizens in the public space of the *agora* (1973). Tocqueville commented on the meetings, the voluntary associations and the democratic sociability of towns in America (1945). Habermas identified the origins of the bourgeois public sphere in the privatization of the conjugal family which fed into the literate public that formed within the coffee-houses, table societies and masonic lodges of late 18th-century European cities (1992; Cohen and Arato, 1992). In these idealized public places, an informed rational debate could take place at least among the elite men who could gain entry to these specific 'public' locales (Landes, 1988).

Thus the 'public sphere' of civil society has normally been conflated with that of 'public space' (Weintraub, 1997). But such spatial models of civil society do not attend to how people (and objects) *move*, or desire to move, between the supposedly private and the public domains. Indeed, it is often argued that the very freedom of mobility holds the potential to disrupt public space, to interfere with more stable associational life and to undermine proper politics. But focusing on movements within and across public space brings into view subaltern publics that have potentially disruptive politics (Ryan, 1997).

Historians have highlighted how both the public and private spheres have been circumscribed by various socio-spatial exclusions (Fraser, 1992; Kelley, 1996). Indeed while Ariès and Elias have carefully traced the material culture of private life as it emerged from the 16th to the 18th centuries, the contemporary analysts reviewed above have treated the private as spatially given rather than as something that is still evolving in relationship to the changing materialities of social life. What is held in common by these theorists of erosion is the way in which the capacity for inclusion/exclusion is seen as spatially and materially fixed.

However, we suggest that public and private life have always been mobile, situational, flickering and fragmented. We focus on automobility and information technology as two key elements of modernity that have ambivalent effects on cultures of democracy. On the one hand, both socio-technologies are seen as contributing to the decline of the public sphere, cars through their erosion of urban public spaces, and information technologies through the fostering of societies of surveillance and voyeurism, On the other hand, both technologies have also contributed to new processes of

democratization. Cars have allowed for a 'sphere of personal freedom, leisure, and freedom of movement' (Habermas, 1992: 129), and have contributed to the peculiar 'auto-freedom' of modernity (Sheller and Urry, 2000). Likewise, information technology, especially the Internet, is envisioned as opening up new possibilities for global communication and democratization (Castells, 2001). The ambivalence of these opposing interpretations arises from how they put the public and the private against each other, while maintaining the boundary between them. What neither analysis recognizes is how both of these socio-technologies undo all divisions between public and private life through their machinic, mobile hybridities.

First then, automobility: this is a machinic complex of manufactured objects, individual consumption, environmental resource use and dominant culture that generates a specific character of domination over almost all contemporary societies (Sheller and Urry, 2000). It reconfigures the relation between place, space and the mobility of people and objects. The key feature leading to the flexible *and* coercive attraction of automobility is its formation as a 'quasi-private' mobility that subordinates other 'public' mobilities. We should not maintain a *regional* separation of the public versus the private, because its fluidities are simultaneously public *and* private. People move within and between the public and the private, at times being in effect in both simultaneously.

Automobility indeed constitutes a civil society of hybridized 'car-drivers', dwelling privately-within-their-cars, and excluding those without cars or without the 'licence' to drive from the car-dominated public realm. Such a civil society of automobility transforms public spaces into public roads, in which to a significant extent the hybrids of pedestrians, cyclists and even public transport users are marginalized. Only those moving (however slowly) in private vehicles can be *public* within a system in which public roads have been seized by the 'auto-mobile' private citizens cocooned within their 'iron-cages' (of modernity). A civil society of automobility, or the right to drive where and when one wants, involves the mobile transformation of once public space into road space, coercing, constraining and unfolding an awesome domination, such that nearly half of the land in LA, for example, is devoted to car-only environments.

As a rolling private-in-public space, automobility affords dwelling inside a mobile capsule that involves punctuated movement 'on the road'. Private zones of domesticity are reproduced on the road through social relations such as the 'back-seat driver' or the common dependence on a partner for navigation and map reading. A variety of services have become available without leaving the car, as the 'drive-in' becomes a feature of everyday life. Protected by seatbelts, airbags, 'crumple zones', 'roll bars' and 'bull bars', car-dwellers boost their own safety and leave others on the road to fend for themselves. In each car the driver is strapped into a comfortable armchair and surrounded by micro-electronic informational sources, controls and sources of pleasure, what Williams calls the 'mobile privatisation' of the car (Pinkney, 1991: 55).

And this is a private room, a moving private capsule, in which the sensing of the public world is impoverished. The speed at which the car must be driven constrains the driver to always keep moving. Dwelling at speed, drivers lose the ability to perceive local detail, to talk to strangers, to learn of local ways of life, to stop and sense the particularity of place. The sights, sounds, tastes, temperatures and smells of public spaces are reduced to the two-dimensional view through the car windscreen. The public world beyond the windscreen is an alien other, to be kept at bay through the diverse privatizing technologies incorporated within the contemporary car. Thus people remain inside their cars, while the 'coming together of private citizens in public space' is lost to a privatization of the mechanized self moving through the emptied non-places of public roads (Augé, 1995).

If automobility has afforded one set of mobile processes that change the materialization of the private and public, then new communication technologies offer further de-differentiation. In so far as citizenship rests on 'deliberation' or 'communicative action', all forms of communication have been reconfigured by new technologies and the new spatio-temporal patterns of social life through which they are made effective. People can now access 'public information' from 'private spaces' because of the availability of digital networks of electronic data and images. At the same time, however, private spaces and private information are now increasingly susceptible to public eavesdropping or tracking, whether by government agencies, marketing researchers or computer hackers. As public and private become so spatially intermeshed, privacy itself is transformed. Relationships involving new electronic media facilitate the obtaining of information about others, without those people knowing in general about the information flow or about the specific details (Lyon, 1994, 1997: 26–7). Examples include the use of databases to generate details of creditworthiness, surveillance cameras and satellites, computer hacking, the targeting of potential customers using information acquired from other sources, illegal tapping of phone calls, the use of GIS software to produce highly differentiated insurance rates, product choices and so on. These reconfigure humans as bits of information subject to computerized monitoring and control through various 'systems' of which they are typically unaware.

Thus individuals increasingly exist beyond their private bodies. Persons leave traces of their selves in informational space, and can be more readily mobile through space because of a greater potential for 'self-retrieval' at the other end of a network. If people bank electronically, for example, they are able to access their money in many parts of the world today; if they need to establish personal contact with family and friends, they can do so from most anywhere in the world. People are able to 'plug into' global networks of information through which they can 'do' things and 'talk' to people without being present in a particular place. 'Persons' occur as nodes in these networks of communication and mobility in so far as particular moving bodies become the repositories of 'narratives of the self':

memories, plots, characters organized into a 'private life' (Giddens, 1991; White, 1992).

As a consequence, even the most intimate 'private' is no longer entirely 'personal' or 'inner-worldly'. Where the neural networks of the brain stop and the electronic networks of information begin is unclear. Parts of who one is may be stored on hard disks or digital circuits rather than in the 'old grey matter'. Much of what was once 'private' already exists outside of the physical body; the body can in some instances function as a hyperlink for gaining access to fragmented selves, or making connections with various nodes in the personal networks that no longer occur only within private spaces. The information revolution has implanted zones of publicity into the once-private interior spaces of the self and home.

Global Mobilities

Moreover, the mobilities known as 'globalization' further de-differentiate the apparently 'public' and 'private' domains. Globalization can be seen in terms of global fluids constituted of waves of people, information, objects, money, images, risks and networks moving across regions in heterogeneous, uneven, unpredictable and often unplanned shapes (Mol and Law, 1994; Sheller, 2000; Urry, 2000). Such global fluids demonstrate no clear point of departure, just de-territorialized movement, at certain speeds and different levels of viscosity with no necessary end-state or purpose. They result from people acting upon the basis of local information but where these local actions are, through countless iterations, captured, moved, represented, marketed and generalized within multiple global waves often impacting upon distant places and peoples. Global fluids travel along various routeways but, where they escape through the 'wall' into surrounding matter, they effect unpredictable consequences upon that matter. Fluids move according to certain novel shapes and temporalities as they may break free from the linear, clock-time of existing routeways – but they cannot go back, they cannot return since all times are irreversible. The messy complexity of relatively unfixed and mobile publics and privates can best be understood as emergent configurations of people, technologies and places within these global flows.

As a consequence of such global fluids, many apparently public institutions are no longer 'national'. We can distinguish at the global level between first, global civil publics which are concerned with orchestrating consumption and leisure flows, such as the Olympic movement, World Cups, CNN, MTV and so on (Roche, 2000). Second, there are global economic publics, such as the 'public' constituted by stockholders in the dominant 40,000 multinational corporations, the world financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF, or the bodies governing the flows of world trade such as the WTO, the World Intellectual Property Organization and so on. Third, global political publics operate both at the level of the organization of 'states' (EU, UN, UNESCO, IATA) and in the shape of international NGOs (e.g. Amnesty International, Global Exchange, Sisterhood is Global Institute) and

social movements (the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico, or the anti-WTO or anti-globalization campaigns) which envision a global mission. Each of these globals interacts with the others in a complex self-organizing and emergent set of fluidities that are simultaneously public-and-private (Urry, 2002).

Indeed, what we term the 'general public' is also transnational, knowing about and partly relating to these global institutions whose activities, procedures and rules help to constitute that public. Partly as a consequence 'publics' become much more fluidly 'cosmopolitan'. They are mobile, have a strong sense of mobile opportunities, have developed a notion that cultures travel and develop some orientation to the 'other' whose characteristics have been publicized and made visible (see Szerszynski et al., 2000). Related to this is the internationalizing of public spaces across the globe. Efforts to reclaim these public spaces have likewise moved beyond critiques of commodification to more playful interventions in the flows of car-traffic and brand-publicity, often using situated actions to 'jam' global flows (Klein, 2000; McKay, 1998).

And, most significantly, there has been the transformed staging of publicity. Citizenship has always necessitated processes of communication and the distribution of symbolic resources (Murdock, 1992: 20–1). Printing, especially of newspapers, was particularly significant in the 18th- and 19th-century development of the imagined community of the European nation, the public sphere and the growth of the nation-state (Anderson, 1991). In the 20th-century development of national citizenship, publicly owned radio broadcasting has been particularly significant. As Murdock notes: 'Where commercial broadcasting regarded listeners as consumers of products, the ethos of public service viewed them as citizens of a nation state. It aimed to universalize the provision of the existing cultural institutions' (1992: 26–7). Thompson articulates how the global media may create a new forum for discourse. By providing individuals with information and knowledge that they would not otherwise have access to, so 'mediated quasi-interaction can stimulate deliberation just as much as, if not more than, face-to-face interaction in a shared locale' (Thompson, 1995: 256). Awareness of the interconnectedness of the world forces an expansion of private horizons to peoples and places remote in time and space. Thompson's analysis mainly concentrates upon media genres such as news or documentaries that convey facts, proposals, arguments and points of view. But this ignores the unrelenting visual character of contemporary media. The current mass media are comprised of extraordinary flows of visual images that reconstitute how human actions are conceived of and framed. Such continuous flows of images, and associated text, transform what was called the 'public sphere' into what we could conceptualize as a 'public screen', visible everywhere linked to global networks. This transformation further de-differentiates the previously separate spheres of the private and the public, local and global. Where once 'staging' was the operative metaphor for public events, now 'screening' is more appropriate to describe those contexts where privacy has been eroded and where supposedly private lives are ubiquitously screened.

Meyerowitz describes how electronic media leave no time for preparation behind the scenes (1985). Indeed there is little that can be kept secret and remain private. There is no longer a 'private' backstage to be kept hidden from the prying eye of the increasingly *borderless* global media. Meyerowitz describes the fascination with *exposure*, with how the act of exposure is almost more exciting than what is exposed (1985: 311–20). And one screen-exposure leads on to the desire for further exposure in an escalating desire to reveal, to shame, to produce yet another scandal for global circulation. As the current fascination with 'reality television' dramatizes, the personal can no longer be hidden from the global gaze. This exposing of the scandalous misdeeds of the powerful through powerful visual images can happen to every person and institution. No one is exempt from this shaming culture, especially those with a global brand. A person's 'good name' (Clinton), the 'brand' of a state (France and its nuclear testing) or the 'brand' of a corporation (Enron, Exxon), all constitute particularly vulnerable symbolic capital. The visual brand can be threatened with exposure and shame and can rapidly evaporate (as with Monsanto). There is a right of global scrutiny conducted by the media, especially at certain keynote moments, such as big public meetings such as the Rio Earth Summit or the WTO Ministerial Summit in Seattle in 1999. Global scandals are instantaneously transmitted across millions of screens. Scandals threaten 'reputation' and reputation functions as symbolic capital or power that increasingly flows across national borders waiting to be undermined. It is said that the example of Nike, and the threatening of its brand because of the 'slave wages' paid to its workforce, shows that 'public shaming and consumer pressure can have a mighty impact upon mighty manufacturers' (Dionne, 1998; Klein, 2000; Thompson, 2000).

Furthermore, the global media create global 'events' through simultaneous broadcasts. Indeed there are global events in which the world views itself; the event becomes global through its world-wide screening. Examples connected to global citizenship include the Live Aid concert, the release from prison of Nelson Mandela, the dramatic death and funeral of Princess Diana, the Rio Earth Summit, the Beijing Conference, and the *Brent Spar* episode. In the last example:

> . . . the communications deployed were second to none. The protestors had satellite telephones and a Mac computer that downloaded photographs and video footage to a media base in Frankfurt. Greenpeace employed its own photographer and cameraman to capture the images that ensured the story was splashed in papers and television screens across the world. (Pilkington et al., 1995: 4)

Greenpeace campaigners waved to the world from the *Brent Spar* oil rig and were recorded by the world's media who were invited by Greenpeace to use their facilities. Greenpeace spoke for the globe while appearing on the global *screen*.

And now such screens occur not only in the domestic space of the lounge, with the family gathered around its television, but also can be transmitted onto screens in airport lounges, bars, shops, waiting rooms, restaurants, shopping malls or the middle of Times Square in New York. McCarthy describes the huge extent of such 'ambient television', which 'produces the out-of-home TV audience as a mobile and elastic commodity' (2001: 24). Screens are leaving their moorings, so that global events can appear on the moving screens of an airplane, on a laptop computer on a train, on Internet connections within cars and so on. If the traditional threat to a democratic public revolved around issues of the 'staging' of events in a false or mindless 'mass acclamatory' public, the emergence of screening suggests a new set of tensions. Screening can also be thought of in the sense of filtering out the undesirable, of exercising surveillance and control. In other words, the power to shape, filter or 'screen' what appears on the global screen remains a significant issue of political contestation. The highly controlled screening of the Gulf War, the war in Afghanistan, and the war in Iraq, exemplifies the convergence of transport technologies for the moving of armies and weaponry, with the informational technologies by which bombs are guided to their targets and are televisually displayed hitting their targets for a globally watching TV audience on their screens, inside and outside the home.

But, at the same time, social movement activists have recognized the political significance of a private that is at once public, a local that is at once global, a small act that has large implications across the globe (as in chaos theory). Here the globalization of publicity collides with the automobilization of privacy, for anti-roads protesters have been among the first to seize the moment of instability. The British direct action protest group Aufheben, for example, explained that 'by taking over the street itself . . . we made it into our actual living space – rejecting in effect the imposed division between the privatized domain of the householder and the "public" (that is, traffic-dominated) thoroughfare' (McKay, 1998: 108). Likewise, a Reclaim the Streets activist suggested that the group was:

> . . . basically about taking back public space from the enclosed private arena. At its simplest it is an attack on cars as the principal agent of enclosure. It's about reclaiming the streets as public inclusive space from the private exclusive use of the car. (Jordan, 1998: 139–40; see also Sheller, 2000)

The decomposing of public/private spaces also occurs through informational disruption so as to impede the juggernaut of the global media and global economic policies. Private corporations like Microsoft and global economic publics like the WTO have seen their meetings and websites 'jammed' by global coalitions of civil protesters (note the political significance of 'jamming' in a fluid world). De-territorialized global entities are strikingly vulnerable to the processes of democratic 'mobilization' by similarly mobile, de-territorialized social movements that flicker into action across temporally coordinated but widely dispersed spaces of publicity. The

recent proliferation of anti-capitalist, anti-globalization social movements emerged within the context of new mobilities of bodies, capital, objects, money, information and images. Such fragmented and fluid temporalities of public and private exceed any simple notion of boundary erosion or colonization – if anything it is more like 'creolization'. As private life comes to be spoken in the syntax and grammar of the public and public entities adopt the vocabulary of private corporations, the language of rights and citizenship fuses public and private in ever more complex and hybrid mixtures.

One of the fundamental insights of both anti-roads activists and anti-WTO activists is that what people do in their 'private' lives matters at a global 'public' level. A small decision such as whether or not to drive a car has a huge impact on the global totality. Reiterated billions of times, the car–driver hybrid deforms entire landscapes, cities, human health, 'nature', Third World debt, and generates the US-dependence upon world oil resources. Moreover, each act of symbolic and direct resistance against the system of automobility can have repercussions of unpredictable proportions often massively distant from the site of protest. The complexity of the systems of the global economy, polity and civil society means that they are fluid, vulnerable to power effects that can emanate from anywhere and that can 'surge' through the entire system in waves or cascades of action and reaction. Once again, the mobilization of how 'private [global] citizens come together as a [global] public' has the potential to effect surprising and unpredictable outcomes, of the sort that should be examined through the prism of chaos and complexity theory (Sheller, 2000; Urry, 2000, 2003).

Conclusion

First, then, we showed that the category of 'public' is familiar but its varied bases have been insufficiently recognized. Social scientists have not adequately distinguished between them. We further showed that each of these notions of the public gives rise to corresponding notions of the private but these are incommensurable with each other. Various concerns with the blurring of the boundaries between the public and private depend on these very different notions of public and private. We went on to show that, for all these differences, the distinctions are based on inappropriately static or regional notions of public and private domains.

We then elaborated some of the flows and networks that produce complex mobility between and across various public and private realms, so dissolving that divide in radical ways. We examined physical and informational mobilities. We especially analysed the dominant system of car-centred automobility whose spatial fluidities are simultaneously and powerfully both private (mobile privatization) and public (public roads). We also examined new forms of informational and communicational flow, especially noting how individuals increasingly exist beyond their private bodies. Persons leave traces of their selves in informational space, and can be more readily mobile through space.

We further examined aspects of the globalizing of civil society. We

began by developing the concept of global fluids, noting how this transforms any notion of a 'national' public. Especially important has been the transformed staging of publicity. There is the ubiquitous exposure of 'private' lives and scandals, and the staging of mediatized events upon global screens. We described in detail some aspects of a powerful global screening of culture and politics especially through the development of a so-called 'ambient television'.

Contemporary social relations are shown to involve powerful, *mobile* networks, which are refolding what is public and what is private. The analysis of these networks is taking the social sciences way beyond the static, regional and fixed notions of public and private life characteristic of many 20th-century formulations, formulations in social and political theory that no longer suffice in the new century. The distinction between public and private domains should be dispensed with since nothing much of contemporary social life remains on one side or the other of the divide. Thus the problems of (and hopes for) democratic citizenship must be theorized in relation to these dynamic, multiple mobilities of people, objects, information and images, especially as these move in powerfully fused or hybridized forms. The important entities in the contemporary world are various 'material worlds', of fused humans-with-machines necessarily constituted across any public–private divide. Cars, information, communications, screens, are all material worlds, hybrids of private and public life, that mean that many ways in which the divide has been distinguished should be dispensed with. Despite the heroic efforts of 20th-century normative theorists to rescue the divide and to diagnose the causes of its erosion, the patient has died on the operating table. The future of citizenship, democratic possibility and good social science belongs to those who will navigate new material, mobile worlds, bringing into being ways of communication, mobilization and theory that are both and neither, public and private.

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Mimi Sheller is Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Lancaster University. Recent books include *Democracy after Slavery: Black Publics and Peasant Radicalism in Haiti and Jamaica* (2000), *Consuming the Caribbean: From*

Arawaks to Zombies (2003) and *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration* (forthcoming).

John Urry is Professor of Sociology, Lancaster University. Recent books include *Sociology beyond Societies* (2000), *Bodies of Nature* (2001), *The Tourist Gaze* (2nd edn, 2002) and *Global Complexity* (2003).