

With an acceptance of the value of subcultural diversity within the larger society, the abundance of cable channels and inter-networking of community systems permitted sharing of experiences, customs, and artistic expression among various urban groups. Local cable systems and portable video recorders helped foster community awareness and self-development. With the steady proliferation of switched two-way systems in the early 1980's, cable communication was gradually seen as an indispensable tool for local planning.

By 1977 the shift from employment in primary and secondary economic activities to employment in services was virtually complete. Fully seventy-five percent of the work force was engaged in such tertiary service activities. It was also becoming clear that the single term "services" was inadequate, for cybernation had begun to reduce employment even in many service categories. At the same time, there was a dramatic increase in the need for people engaged in human care and community development activities such as health services delivery, education, and child care. Simultaneously a desire for performing socially useful roles which permitted more choice and flexibility instead of a single lifelong occupation were pervading all sectors of the population. Moreover, the very concept of what activities constituted "work" came under intense criticism, with a wide range of people from housewives to students at all levels, arguing that they performed functions that made a valuable contribution to the resources and development of society. Finally, the awareness of the fact that American society had decades ago shifted from an economy centered around competition for scarce resources to one of an abundance, gave rise to a wide-spread belief that the provision of basic goods and services required for a life of dignity should be a right of citizenship. The collective force of such events and demands resulted in the institution in 1978 of a guaranteed annual income to all persons.

The cumulative effect of such structural changes in society as a more equitable distribution of goods and services, a reduction in levels of consumption, a more careful use of resources, a blurring of distinctions between leisure, work, and education, and concurrent changes in technologies of information, energy, transportation, and housing was to diminish the necessity for megalopolitan concentrations of people. Two-way cable communication services played a vital role in facilitating the formation during the 1980's of a great variety of urban environments. "New" towns, medium-sized urban areas, community clusters, communal settings, and former small towns and rural areas were receiving emigrants from the denser urban complexes. This expanded range of different environments encouraged more involvement with alternative social relationships such as extended families, family clusters, learning groups, group marriages, and religious groups that had previously enjoyed only limited experimentation. Interactive cable systems with ownership having been separated from programming in the mid-1970's permitted people to maintain linkages within and between differing types of communities; some geographically concentrated, some spatially diffuse, others transient and based solely upon temporary convergence of interest.

For the first time, people were able to enjoy both the benefits of smaller, intimate communities and the access to and participation in larger, more culturally diverse urban environments: national, trans-national, and global. By the mid-1980's the former model of the urban-rural dichotomy had all but disappeared from sociological theory: participation in urban ways of life no longer depended upon habitation within an area arbitrarily defined by population, density, or political boundaries but was instead determined by the access to communicative and informational nets.

The maturation of cable communications and its ancillary services aided in the emergence of a full-blown post-mass-consumption/production urban economy. Advanced cybernation with computer operations capable of rapid reprogramming was permitting a return to high quality crafted goods designed and produced to fit unique criteria. Housing, for instance, could be built to meet the specific needs of particular communities or even individual families. Urban planners and designers saw cable as a means of receiving information about the needs and preferences directly from potential user groups. Cable was also seen as a medium of presenting simulated alternative environments and housing configurations and eliciting reactions to them. Outcomes of various policy choices were projected and compared in terms of their possible long-run ecological consequences. Thus it served as a valuable tool for the creation of more responsive and responsible designs.

Interactive cable systems permitted the development of more individualized inter-personal, intra-community and trans-community communicative services as well. People involved in kinetic and visual arts used cable and related technologies or portable video and cassettes to introduce other people to the process of expressing images and ideas. Many people became involved in the production and distribution of entertainment for specialized audiences. Still others engaged in gathering, arranging, and presenting widely varying types of informational materials to meet the demands for more useful and useable knowledge. Multiple-access retrieval systems via cable gave rise to large groups of people engaged in reading, reviewing, cataloging, and abstracting literature and research documents for users who had been suffering from an overload of data and were in need of more manageable forms of information. Completely new forms of exchanging and presenting information were created, centering around methods for understanding interrelationships of societal changes. Still other people became involved in various types of community development, organization, advocacy, individual and group therapy, and the analysis of problems, goals, and potential areas of conflict and cooperation. Finally, others engaged themselves in the communication of customs, beliefs, events, and cultural contributions of the particular communities of which they were a part. Members of communities which were mobile used cable to form ties with those which were geographically stationary. With the realization that urban communities were socially interdependent, cable nets enabled the creation of shared pools of information and ideas and the joining together of disparate groups of people in collective attempts at bringing about desired changes.