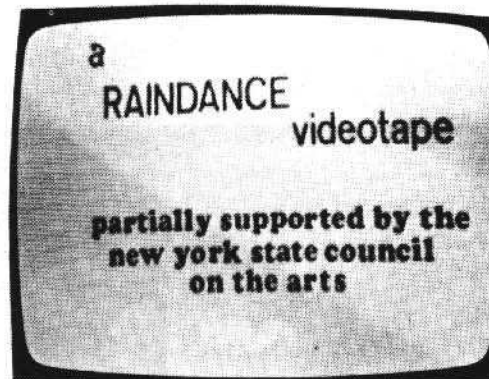


By 1995, it was clear that many of the earlier predictions concerning the impact of communications were being proven wrong. Travel had hardly decreased; rather it saw a net increase as communication about different urban cultures, subcultures, and environments encouraged direct experiential visitation. Predictions thirty years earlier of people communicating rather than commuting to work had also not been borne out, for the very nature of work changed as it fused with localized community service and education. Routinized travel did indeed decline; but travel itself was transformed from mere movement from one point to another to an integral part of the total learning process. Finally, electronic communication did not, as had been forecasted, replace such activities as shopping, for people valued the social function of the community marketplace and recognized the importance of tactile, olfactory, kinesthetic, and spatial experiences. Indeed, the proliferation of communication technologies resulted in *more* direct human interaction rather than less; there was a great increase in the demand for places facilitating direct human interchange. The interrelated effects of transportation and communication technologies, economic change, and political decentralization was bringing about the simultaneous phenomena of societal dispersion and integration—dispersion into a multiplicity of diverse communities and the integration into a national (and increasingly global) urban culture.

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Conclusion

The scenarios I have presented are only skeletal images, verbal sketches of two possible futures. There are, I am sure, elements in each that could be considered undesirable by someone. Indeed, the scenarios are not necessarily mutually exclusive; a synthesis of conditions from both might well come to pass. Both might be dismissed as mere extreme utopian or dystopian fantasies, though I believe both to be realistically possible. Neither "future history" is entirely probable, although I feel that the first alternative is more likely. (Another more probable future which was not discussed is one of increasing ecological chaos culminating in global devastation.)

Unforeseen innovations and events during the coming three decades might explode all present projections. Nonetheless, the normative task of attempting to arrive at desirable futures necessitates an ongoing analysis of the multi-fold potentials, negative as well as positive, of emerging broadband communications. Only in such a manner are we presented with effective charts for helping to guide urban change in the present.

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