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Abstract and Keywords

This article examines the relevance of public work to civil society. It explains that the concept of civil society as a home for the deliberative citizen and the related idea of volunteer service has gained currency as an alternative to the rancor and fragmentation which are the stock-in-trade of public culture. It outlines the profound challenges that face democracy against the onslaught of a spreading consumer culture and details the limits of civil society and the deliberative citizen. It argues that there are two very different ideas of civic agency embedded in the recent history of civil society, corresponding to different concepts of the citizen and civic education.

Keywords: public work, civil society, deliberative citizen, volunteer service, public culture, democracy, consumer culture, civic agency, citizen education, civic education

WHEN civil society reappeared in democratic theory in the 1970s and 1980s, the concept of “space” was emblazoned on banners of sweeping social movements. Civil society formed a liberated zone from which to mount challenges to authoritarian governments—what Frances Hagopian called “the monster state”—in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. As Hagopian put it, “Horizontal solidarities in civil society challenged a corporatist state...in such a way that expanded the scope of freedom” (2006, 17). Today, civil society retains some of that aura of political freedom as a space for uncoerced civic agency in a world where manipulative techniques infiltrate every corner.

In continuing recognition of this history, theorists as diverse as Benjamin Barber and Jürgen Habermas see civil society as the citizen space. Barber, a powerful critic of “thin democracy” and an activist organizer of international connections among participatory democrats, created the definition of civic engagement that became dominant in the United States. Civil society, according to Barber (1995, 7), includes “those domains Americans occupy when they are engaged neither in government (voting, serving on

juries, paying taxes) nor in commerce (working, producing, shopping, consuming).” His book *A Place for Us: How to Make Society Civil and Democracy Strong* (1998) developed this view, arguing that work is disappearing before the advance of technology and the market and proposing that the voluntary sector is the home for democracy. In this home, community service with civic reflection is the way to cultivate the identity of citizen as alternative to “producer” and “consumer.” Barber also has strongly advocated for deliberative practices.

(p. 325) Habermas, a founding figure in deliberative democracy, has long sought to establish the theoretical grounds for a public sphere of communicative rationality rooted in civil society that separates deliberation from the entanglements of corporations and government bureaucracies (1998). In his view, civil society is “an open and inclusive network of overlapping, sub-cultural publics having fluid temporal, social and substantive boundaries.” Though civil society is more vulnerable to inequalities than government, “it also is more open to new communicative insights” (1998, 307, 308).

In this chapter I argue that there are two very different ideas of civic agency embedded in the recent history of civil society, corresponding to different concepts of the citizen and civic education. They point towards very different approaches to change. The concept of civil society as a home for the deliberative citizen (and the related idea of volunteer service) has gained currency as an alternative to the rancor and fragmentation which are the stock-in-trade of public culture. In this usage, civil society is the place where people learn to be “civil,” and in the process gain what is called “communicative power.” As Fung and Wright (2001, 31) put it, “Through practice individuals might become better deliberators. By seeing that cooperation mediated through reasonable deliberation yields benefits not accessible through adversarial methods, participants might increase their disposition to be reasonable, and to transform narrowly self-interested preferences accordingly.”

Deliberation is worthwhile, but the deliberative citizen is too narrow a conception of civic agency to make much change. Specifically, it cannot stem the metastasizing consumer culture which accompanies radical privatization. Deliberative theorists make the mistake of separating citizenship from work, or productive activity, paid or unpaid, that builds the common world as well as private goods. In so doing they remove from the civic animus its most important resource. In contrast, the concept of the citizen as a co-creator of democracy, understood as a way of life built through the public work of citizens, holds far more potential to challenge consumerism, to rebuild the commonwealth, and to develop robust civic identities. Public work, by which I mean sustained efforts by a mix of people who make the commons, or things of lasting civic value, puts the citizen at the center of public creation. As citizens create a commonwealth of public goods, they become a commonwealth of citizens. To take seriously developing the capacities of the citizen as

co-creator requires theorizing the public dimensions of work, the capacities of civic agents to undertake it, and how and where they develop such capacities. Schools of civic agency understood as co-creative public work can be called “free spaces.”

In this chapter, I outline the profound challenges that face democracy against the onslaught of a spreading consumer culture, detail the limits of civil society and the deliberative citizen, and argue that we need a different concept of civic agency and where it is developed.

(p. 326) **1. Dismantling the Commonwealth**

Commonwealth ideals once radiated across American politics and society (Boyte 1989), creating a vision of democracy as a way of life. In various formulations including the “cooperative commonwealth,” the “maternal commonwealth,” and the “commonwealth of freedom,” the commonwealth was the idiom of choice for radicals and reformers, labor organizers, small farmers and business owners, suffragists and feminists, and those who struggled against racial bigotry and oppression. It challenged America in a prophetic voice to live up to its ideals.

An emphasis on the public dimensions of property drew from experiences of the “commons” such as grazing and pasture lands, streams, and forests for which whole communities had responsibilities, and in which they had rights of use. The commons also included public goods of general benefit built mainly through citizen labor, like schools, libraries, community centers, wells, roads, and bridges. For many immigrants, America represented a chance to recreate the commons that had been destroyed or privatized by elites in European societies (Bertoff 1982). Thus, Oscar and Mary Handlin used “commonwealth” to describe collaborative effort in Massachusetts: “For the farmers and seamen, for the fishermen, artisans and new merchants, commonwealth repeated the lessons they knew from the organization of churches and towns...the value of common action” (Handlin and Handlin 1969, 30). As the United States took shape after the American Revolution, the commonwealth approach continued in myriad forms of public work that was paid as well as unpaid.

Today, the attenuated qualities of the language of commonwealth make the term sound like a dusty museum piece. This declension highlights the erosions in civic life and in the civic identities of citizens. Consumer culture inculcates habits of what Barber calls “choice without consequence.” As he put it, “Decades of privatization and marketization have obscured not only what it means to be a public...but also what it means to be free” (Barber 2006, 10). Studies document the damage wrought by the spread of the

consumer culture into every corner of human experience. For instance, Susan Faludi describes the modern male condition in a consumer culture as like the “trapped housewife” of Betty Friedan (1963), experiencing an inchoate sense of lost identity and purpose hard even to name (1999). William Doherty details the spread of consumerism into marriages, transforming the concept of marriage as a life built over time in common, often through hardships and difficulties, into the idea of a search for consumer needs fulfillment (2001). Kerry Ann O’Meara (2007) has described the “striving culture” in higher education that turn students into customers and faculty into acquisitive awards-seekers. A recent World Bank study suggests that the utopian consumer images carried by the internet to rural youth in Thailand lure them away from supportive networks and communities into cities like Bangkok where they have few resources.¹ And as I have noted, “rural youth entering the cities with Playstation2 images of Laura Croft dancing in their heads may not be well equipped for the challenges that await them” (Boyte 2008, 212).

(p. 327) Habermas expresses concern about consumers’ “privatistic retreat from the citizens’ role” (1998, 78), but deliberative practices do little to halt the process. In fact, deliberation easily coexists with the consumer citizen, while separating those in government from their own citizenship. The problem is that civil society understood as the space of deliberative citizens severs the crucial connection between citizenship, and work.

2. The Deliberative Citizen of Civil Society

The western intellectual tradition of political theory conceives of public life as the democratization of aristocratic leisure, contrasting civic activity with work. As Barber (1998, 132) puts it, “To the Greeks, labor by itself defined only mere animal existence, while leisure was the condition for freedom, politics, and truly ‘human’ forms of being.” Like the Greeks, Hannah Arendt (1958, 161–62) viewed work as part of the apolitical world. She saw “manual labor” as an undignified realm of necessity, “herdlike,” while “work” was more creative and important, the activity of *homo faber*, or “man, the maker of things,” the builder of the world. Yet Arendt still believed that work did not belong in the public arena of “deeds and action,” and specifically of politics. She held that the worker’s “public realm is the exchange market, where he can show the products of his hand and receive the esteem which is due him.” Producers remained “private,” or isolated: “*homo faber*, the builder of the world and the producer of things, can find his proper relationship to other people only by exchanging his products with theirs because these products themselves *are always produced in isolation*” (emphasis added). Arendt argues that the thought and manual art which produces craft—the creation of a “model”

or idea in one's mind which one then reproduces through shaping materials of the world—necessarily requires isolation. Only apprentices and helpers are needed, she argued, in relations that are based on inequality.

Many civil society theorists follow Arendt in separating work from public life. Thus Cohen and Arato's *Civil Society and Political Theory* (1992, ix) took work off the map of civic engagement. Their book has democratic aspirations, but their idea of civil society, seeking to retain for the concept a critical edge, revised the classical notion of civil society as it descended from the Scottish Enlightenment and from Hegel, which *included* large institutions and commerce and *excluded* the family. Cohen and Arato argue for “a reconstruction [of the concept] involving a three-part model distinguishing civil society from both state and economy.” They see this definition as the way to “underwrite the dramatic oppositional role of this concept under authoritarian regimes and to renew its critical potential under liberal democracies.” Hence civil society becomes “a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the (p. 328) family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication.”

Deliberative theorists draw on this map of civic space. Indeed, Habermas anticipated Cohen and Arato by decades in making a distinction between Greek democracy and contemporary circumstances in his classic work, *Transformation of the Public Sphere* ([1962] 1989). For the Greeks, public judgment was conveyed by the concept of *phronesis*, practical wisdom developed through public action around common issues in the space of public life. For Habermas ([1962] 1989, 52), the public sphere in the modern world is qualitatively different than that of the Greeks: “The theme of the modern (in contrast to the ancient) public sphere shifted from the properly political tasks of a citizenry acting in common (i.e., administration of law as regards internal affairs and military survival as regards external affairs) to the more properly civic tasks of a society engaged in critical public debate.”

Habermas described a new deliberative role which emerged during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in a vibrant urban culture of debate and discussion, formed in a new spatial environment of lecture halls, museums, public parks, theaters, meeting houses, opera houses, and cafes. In such social spaces, older hierarchical principles of deference and ascribed social status gave way to public principles of rational discourse. Emergent professional and business groups asserted claims to a more general social and political leadership. In such spaces, patterns of communication emerged that were characterized by norms of inclusivity, the give and take of argument, and a relatively horizontal experience of interaction. Arguments were judged by fit, by considerations of anticipated consequences, by excellence of logic and so forth, not mainly by the social

status of the speaker. By the late eighteenth century or the beginning of the nineteenth (depending on the country), a public sphere grounded in civil society “was casting itself loose as a forum in which the private people, come together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion” (Habermas [1962] 1989, 25–26).

In the late nineteenth century, Habermas argued, the public sphere atrophied as the public began to break apart into myriad special interests. Technical and instrumental rationality replaced more interactive public dialogue. Technical rationality depends upon a prior assumption of what the ends entail—how problems are defined and what solutions are desirable—and concerns itself instead with the most efficient means to reach them. After *Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas sought to sustain an enclave of “un-coercive interaction on the basis of communication free from domination” in theory and in practice (1971, 58). In this enclave he hoped to “locate a gentle, but obstinate, a never silent although seldom redeemed claim to reason, a claim that must be recognized de facto whenever and where ever there is to be consensual action” (1979, 97). But his map separates citizens from the work of actively building the commonwealth.

There is room for debate about the sharpness of distinctions between “communicative” and “practical” interests in Habermas's writings, but the general point is clear. In *Between Facts and Norms*, he argued that the capacity of civil society “to (p. 329) solve problems on its own is limited. The basic function of the public sphere is to move problems to the formal system” of politics and law-making. In the spaces of civil society, the goal should be “influence,” not “power.” Citizen efforts require translation into formal structures to amount to much: “Just like social power, political influence based on public opinion can be transformed into political power only through [formally authorized] institutionalized procedures.” The power of citizens is sharply circumscribed, and Habermas asserts that “the public opinion that is worked up via democratic procedures into communicative power cannot ‘rule’ of itself but can only point the use of administration power in specific directions” (1998, 359, 362, 363, 300).

Civil society in such terms is the site for citizens who in their civic identities are separated from the work of those in government, the economy, or the professions. Like liberalism, Habermas said, “discourse theory...respects the boundaries between ‘state’ and ‘society’ but it distinguishes civil society.” In particular, civil society in his view is the “social basis of the autonomous public sphere,” distinct both from the economic system of markets and productive activity and from government. The strength of civil society is that it resists totalizing, technocratic impulses operative elsewhere. But its limits are also sharply drawn: “The success of deliberative politics depends not on a collectively acting citizenry but on the institutionalization of the corresponding procedures and conditions of communication, as well as the interplay of institutionalized deliberative processes with

informally developed public opinions.” For Habermas, there are clear “no trespass” signs; “democratic movements emerging from civil society must give up holistic aspirations to a self-organizing society...civil society can have at most an indirect effect on the self-transformation of the political system.” He argues that “administrative power” is qualitatively and unalterably different than the space of civil society, and that “the administrative power deployed for purposes of social planning and supervision is not a suitable mechanism for fostering emancipated forms of life. These...cannot be *brought about* through [state] intervention [italics in original]” (1998, 299, 307, 308, 298, 372).

Dynamics which put citizens in the role of discussants *about* the common world, rather than active makers *of* it, correspond to formal distinctions in modern societies in which politics “belong” to the state system. In this theoretical frame, citizens have come to be consumers of the commonwealth, not its creators, even if the process raises some concerns. Thus the recent focus on “governance, not government” incorporates deliberative practices as a way to make government more responsive and interactive with citizens. This was a main theme in Fung and Wright's design principles drawn from case studies in what they called “empowered deliberative democracy,” or EDD (2001). It is a major emphasis in approaches to governance promoted by the World Bank and other foreign aid groups around the world.

Deliberation by itself puts the citizen in the position of consumer. Government's role is to deliver services. Civil servants see themselves as outside the citizenry. This is a widely shared viewpoint far beyond the ranks of theorists. As Paul Light (quoted in Boyte and Kari 1996, 195) puts it, “Departments and agencies have plenty of (p. 330) advocates for doing things *for* citizens and *to* citizens, but there are almost no voices for seeing government workers as citizens themselves, working with other citizens.” Politicians and government employees alike have psychologically removed themselves from being part of the citizenry. Yet deliberative and civil society theorists and others take conventional definitions of politics far too literally. Their arguments ignore the way “talk” is always connected to other processes of social reproduction. They slight the multiple ways in which constructions of the commonwealth can occur everywhere. Citizens need to be understood as at the center of the process if they are to care for a world created and shared in common. To offer an alternative to the deliberative citizen of civil society requires an alternative framework for thinking about civic spaces, the capacities and identities that are developed within them, and what it is that people do there.

3. Working the World in Public Ways

Cynthia Estlund (2000) has shown that work—understood as productive activity that makes things in the world—is a far more substantial way to bridge differences of “life worlds” than the search for truth and mutual understanding. She brings together a wealth of theoretical perspectives with a large body of social science research and examples from popular culture in order to remedy what she sees as the neglect of work and the workplace by communitarian and civil society theorists who focus on associational life.

Estlund makes a compelling case that, despite continuing patterns of hierarchy and discrimination, workplaces are still the only environments where most people are likely to have sustained encounters with people of differing racial, cultural, and ideological backgrounds. They also engage in such experiences with relative civility, and around practical, goal-directed tasks, making them relatively conducive to sustained experiences of collaboration. Her evidence shows that these features of work and workplaces enable people to develop enhanced respect for others, reduce their prejudices and stereotypes, build trust, develop civic skills, and create cross-group networks. Estlund observes that “it is not just the friendship potential of workplace relations that makes it a promising source of interracial contact.” The work process itself “is generally cooperative and directed towards shared objectives; much of it is sustained, personal, informal, and one-to-one.” Workplaces further democratic equality by “convening strangers from diverse backgrounds and inducing them to work together towards shared objectives under the aegis of the societally imposed equality principle” (2000, 25).

Estlund also shows how U.S. social movements such as union organizing efforts in the 1930s, the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and the feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s made the workplace more open and public. Thus, section seven of the Wagner Act, in part the product of New Deal reform and (p. 331) organizing, created “a kind of rudimentary system of civil liberties within the workplace” which in turn allowed further organization and action by workers. The equal protection of the law provision, enshrining in words “the notion that people should not be segregated or subordinated on the basis of their race or certain other immutable traits” was the result of civil rights efforts (Estlund, 85). Though the effort is not completed, it furthers democratic purposes.

Paying attention to work and the workplace raises questions of power, change, public creation, and social movements that are absent from conventional civil society theory. In particular emphasizing work in its public dimensions and possibilities has potential to reunite civic processes with civic consequences.

4. Free Spaces and Co-Creation

Free spaces are the schools of democratic movements. The concept illuminates limits not only in deliberation but also in critical theory as conventionally developed. Modern critical theorists have posed the question of how can citizens, bemused by the socialization dynamics of modern capitalism, ever come to see themselves as other than free consumers, even though their apparent free choice itself functions to hide the oppressive relations of society? Karl Marx (1981–84) made the point about mystification—what he called false consciousness—in *The German Ideology*: “Thus, in imagination, individuals seem freer under the dominance of the bourgeoisie than before, because their conditions of life seem accidental: in reality, of course, they are less free, because they are more subject to the violence of things.”

Prevailing intellectual fashions, updating such arguments in comparative and anticolonial terms and drawing on cultural theorists of power such as Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault, and Claude Lévi-Strauss, focused on the ways in which cultural norms and practices operate in the spaces of everyday life to make oppressive assumptions seem normal and inevitable. Dominant cultural ideas, including those generated by the work of intellectuals themselves, shape, define, and circumscribe the life worlds and possibilities of ordinary people. For instance, the philosopher Rick Turner (Fluxman and Vale 2004) in South Africa observed how the apartheid system dramatized the “naturalization” of oppressive racial domination. Apartheid seemed self-evidently “the way things are” to whites and even to many blacks. Virtually every institution from family to church, from school to media, constantly reinforced white privilege and power.

Cultural theorists of power have brought important attention to previously invisible power dynamics. The problem is that when intellectuals develop a theory of what is to be done in response, they radically oversimplify the operations of cultural power. The result is a culturally estranged and alienated politics. Jean Paul Sartre's (Fluxman and Vale 2004) strategy of what he called “transcendence,” or the act of standing outside prescribed roles and the commonplaces of culture with a (p. 332) sharply critical eye, can be taken as emblematic of the general stance of critical scholars. This stance is widely hostile towards rooted institutions such as religious congregations, ethnicity, family, and ties to place, as well as to the broader cultural traditions and symbols that constitute a sense of peoplehood. The view of liberated consciousness as a process of radical separation from roots and traditions was vividly summarized by Stanley Aronowitz in his essay titled, appropriately enough, “The Working Class: A Break with the Past” (1974, 312–13). According to Aronowitz, all particular identities of “race and nationality and sex

and skill and industry” are obstacles to the development of genuinely oppositional, radical consciousness.

In contrast, a generation of social historians concerned with the actual development of popular movements—how it is that ordinary people, steeped in experiences of subordination, develop the courage and confidence to assert themselves and to become civic agents of their lives, not simply victims of larger social forces—has produced a rendering of the roots of democratic movements far more nuanced than the views of alienated intellectuals. Social history draws attention to the conflicted, contradictory quality of community settings and cultural traditions, full of oppositional currents, democratic elements, and insurgent themes as well as hierarchical and oppressive ones. Social historians richly describe the ways in which powerless groups draw inspiration from cultural elements that critical intellectuals write off as part of a monochromatically oppressive system.

Sara Evans and I, building on such history, have combined ideas of public space and freedom for democratic self-organization and co-creation in the concept of “free spaces” (1986, 1992). Free spaces, rooted in everyday life settings, are places in which powerless people have a measure of autonomy for self-organization and engagement with alternative ideas, and they are also places where people come to see themselves as makers of culture and producers of the world, not simply its consumers. Free spaces are places where people learn political and civic skills. They are also culture-creating spaces where people generate new ways of looking at the world. In free spaces, people simultaneously draw upon and rework symbols, ideas, themes, and values in their traditions and the culture to challenge conventional beliefs.

Thus, for instance, the historian E. P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1966) described places such as taverns and sectarian churches in which working people found space for intellectual life and democratic self organizations, separate from the gentry and the crown. Evans and I argued that free spaces also lay at the base of every broad democratic movement in American history, from the African American freedom struggle to the populist Farmers’ Alliances of the 1880s, from labor struggles of the 1930s to feminist movements and modern community organizing. Such democratic movements show how complex are the power relationships of culture within and across societies.

Subterranean spaces for political agency and culture-making can be found even in settings that seem overwhelmingly oppressive. Thus, for instance, African American slaves in the American south found such spaces for self-definition and for insurgent cultural alternatives to conventional views of American democracy in the (p. 333) midst of extremely brutal circumstances. Christian religious services and practices were originally

taught to slaves by slave owners in an effort to break their ties with their African roots and socialize them into passive, docile roles. Yet Christianity provided rich materials for strategies of everyday resistance (for instance, work songs and Gospel music) as well as far-ranging radical democratic visions of a transformed racial and political order. Martin Luther King and others built on this insurgent heritage to claim and transform definitions of American democracy, freedom, and citizenship.

Overlapping with civil society are qualities such as public space and freedom that are often found in voluntary and community settings. As the movements of the 1970s and 1980s illustrated, these can create seedbeds for democratic movements. In everyday community settings, people can find space for relatively uncoerced conversation, for self-organization, and for free intellectual life. Yet democratic movements arise to address patterns of power, not to find a home. Democratic movements subvert boundaries and cross categories. And they draw on the civic authority that comes from work.

5. Democratic Movements and the Commonwealth

Free spaces often find hospitable ground in the life of communities and voluntary associations. But their qualities of freedom for self-organization, political education, and public co-creation are not the singular properties of community or voluntary groups. Nor is “volunteerism” or “deliberation” the best way to describe action within such spaces. Broad democratic movements incubate in diverse settings which people own, that have a measure of autonomy from dominant power, and that also have a public quality connecting people's efforts to the sense that they are helping to build a larger world. The concept of free spaces does not so much refute the idea of civil society as show its sharp limitations. Free spaces dramatize the necessity of bringing work into the equation. Throughout American history, democratic movements gained public power by drawing out the public dimensions of work. Such movements argued that the powerless, helping to “build the commonwealth,” merit full recognition as citizens.

This claim was the central theme in the African American freedom movement. The civil rights movement built on the authority derived from making work visible and testifying to its strength and endurance. Cristina Beltrán has shown how the claim that “illegals” were “building America” was central to immigrant demonstrations in 2006 which called for reform in immigration laws (Beltrán 2009). Similarly, in women's history, women used claims based on their civic work (challenging the distinction between paid and unpaid) as the foundation for suffrage. Thus, Francis Willard, leader of the largest voluntary association of women in the nineteenth (p. 334) century, the Women's Christian

Temperance Union, titled her book *The Work and Workers of the Women's Christian Temperance Union* (1972).

Free spaces reach beyond geographic communities through work and organizations associated with work. In the African American freedom struggle, for instance, groups like the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and community groups such as women's auxiliaries described in the study by Melinda Chateauwert, *Marching Together: Women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters* (1997), sustained free spaces for political education and oppositional culture for generations. Free spaces are also foundations for the next wave of democracy-building.

6. Conclusion: The Democracy Movement of the Twenty-First Century

Commonwealth language has had particular power in the United States, where the concept of “commonwealth” has been widely used in democratic movements. But the commons, in fact, can be found in every society. Understanding of how common pool resources are sustained by citizen action and learning has advanced considerably through the theory-building of Elinor Ostrom and her colleagues at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, for which Ostrom shared the 2009 Nobel Prize in Economics (1990, 1999). Ostrom found that decentralized governance with high popular participation—what can be called productive activity that builds and takes care of the commonwealth—has key advantages in terms of efficiency, sustainability, and equity. These include the incorporation of local knowledge; greater involvement of those who are trustworthy and who respect principles of reciprocity; feedback on subtle changes in resources; better-adapted rules; lower enforcement costs; and redundancy, which decreases the likelihood of a system-wide failure. Ostrom argues persuasively for a mix of decentralized and general governance, what she calls “polycentric governance systems... where citizens are able to organize not just one but multiple governing authorities at different scales.” Such mixed systems may be messy, but in studies of local economies, “messy polycentric systems significantly outperformed metropolitan areas served by a limited number of large-scale, unified governments” (Ostrom 1999, 37, 38, 40).

In shared governance a change in identifications and identities takes place. As people take care of the commons, they partly become the commonwealth they care for. There are multiple examples of growing attention to diverse forms of commons, from our common pool of knowledge to water resources, from public spaces to forests and fisheries.² The era of privatization requires a global movement to rebuild the commons, tied to skills, habits, and sensibilities of public work. Free spaces are the schools of such a movement. They are also the seedbeds of democratic hope.

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Notes:

(1.) See <http://www.digitaldivide.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/MBR2.0-broadband-Thailand-2015.pdf>

(2.) The new commons movement is chronicled in websites such as On the Commons (www.onthecommons.org).

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