The Decline of Community and Democracy

and the

Ascendancy of the Mass Production-Consumption Society

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the forces transforming the small town and its community and draws implications for the larger society. These forces are a consequence of an economic, social and political organization that is contrary to the 'small public' foundations of American democracy. The demise of town and community in America has been the result of an undemocratic process directed by a mass market economy. Growth of the mass market and consequently the dominance of economic concerns, have overshadowed concerns for well-being and the traditional values of American democracy.
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the forces which have been transforming the small town and its community and draw the implications from this that apply to the larger society and the quality of democracy in America. It is my belief that these forces represent a style of economic, social and political organization that is detrimental to small communities and contrary to the ‘small public’ foundations of American democracy.

I have chosen as an occasion to explore these issues my relationship with a particular small rural town in which my personal family has been associated with for many generations. This town which I will call “Fauston”,* like most small towns in America, has undergone dramatic changes over the past several decades. The changes and experiences of this town may represent the general experience of small towns throughout America.

After I spent a period of time in Fauston, questioning and interviewing many people who live and work there, it became apparent that my beliefs about the demise of the community, while echoed in the responses of many, were not shared by all the residents of Fauston. Most recognized the changes, but whether these changes were chiefly negative or positive was in dispute. There was general recognition of the dilapidated condition of the town center but for some this did not seem a major concern nor did it in their opinion reflect the state of the community. Though I could not find evidence of what I would call a healthy community, many of the citizens of Fauston held a positive opinion of the community. There was a conflict of opinions about the state of the community. Conflicting views about the state of the community in general are also evident in both the popular discourse and in academic studies of the community. I concluded that the underlying basis

* Pseudonym offered by Professor Gad Horowitz, University of Toronto 1997.
for this controversy lies in the definitions of community and is a major concern of this thesis. I elaborate on this concern to indicate how a certain contemporary redefinition of community may serve the trend towards a mass society and therefore reduce the quality and distinctiveness of the individual community.

The growth of the mass market and consequently the dominance of economic concerns, has overshadowed concern for the traditional values of American democracy. The system of small autonomous deliberating publics that served as a conceptual model and foundation for America’s representative style of democracy, is opposed to the centralizing forces of a commercialized mass society, organized for efficiency and production in the mass market. The demise of small town communities and their absorption into the mass system contradicts the rhetoric of grass roots democracy.

It is a contention of this author that the community, as a separate autonomous unit is integral to the design of America’s democratic system. I will argue that the towns and structures which support community are being overrun and redesigned by the encroachment of mass market enterprises. Consequently, the communities which these towns once supported are dissolving into a mass commercial society. The significance of these events will be discussed according to their negative implications for grass roots democracy in America. It is suggested here that the ascendancy of the market and market values over democracy and community values is a reality in modern America. Subsequent to this, I will also argue that the dominance of the mass productive system is well entrenched and total; that people have absorbed into their consciousness the ideology of the “productive apparatus” and thought has become what Herbert Marcuse describes as “one dimensional” [Marcuse 1964:10,11].
In chapter one, I will explore the political rhetoric of community and the ways in which academics have defined community. From both the political and academic use of the term it is possible to see a general division between concepts of community which have a strong territorial component and those which regard territory as a nonessential element. It is argued here that in America's style of representational democracy the disregard of 'place' in defining community has political significance. Removing the element of locale from the definition of community destroys the concept and replaces it with what are essentially associations of various kinds - artists, lawyers, ethnic groups and others. But these are not communities. It is my contention that the notion of locale is integral to the concept of community and it is in this sense that 'community' is used in this thesis. Omitting the significance of locale from community serves the trend toward mass society as it lessens the understanding of what is being destroyed.

Chapter two looks at the demise of local community as the result of the structural demands of the mass market system. This reorganization of society has been an undemocratic process drastically altering the culture of America.

Chapter three looks at the implications of the mass market society for the democratic tradition in America. Here it is argued that the disintegration of the local community that comes with the transformation into mass society is in opposition to the Jeffersonian 'small public' foundations of American democracy.

In the fourth chapter I explore Marcuse's description of "one dimensional thought" as both the product of domination by the mass productive or 'productive-destructive' system and its major defense against opposition [Marcuse10,11].
In conclusion it is suggested that under the dominance of the mass production-consumption system, within the confines of one dimensional thought, well-being has come to be narrowly equated with production and economic expansion in general. This serves the interests of national and global organization of society, but not the purposes of democracy or human well-being. To some extent, the ends of the productive system and that of human well-being are congruent, but beyond a certain point we cease to be the masters of the 'machine' and become instead mere producers and consumers, the instruments through which the machine fulfills its own ends without concern for well-being or for democracy.

Throughout this discussion the community of Fauston serves as a microcosm for observing the impact of this larger system, determining its guiding purposes and assessing the implications for the community, the larger society and particularly democracy in America.
CHAPTER I: THE COMMUNITY: TRANSFORMING OR DISSOLVING?

The visible ruin of the town square and other negative developments in Fauston seemed to suggest or perhaps symbolize a corresponding breakdown of the town’s community. Pushed and pulled by developments on its periphery and lacking a focal point, the town seemed to have fragmented into unconnected parts. Had the community survived these disruptions? Had it changed and adapted new patterns of interaction to compensate for the structural, social and economic changes that had occurred? Or had it disintegrated along with the town’s physical structures?

Many of the residents of Fauston with whom I spoke with confirmed my own initial beliefs that the community had suffered as the town had “developed”. The community now seemed only faintly represented in special community events. At the same time, other town residents claimed that there is a healthy community in Fauston. Yet, the types of interactions they described were mostly selective meetings, requiring previously planned arrangements. I did not see the kinds of face to face meeting and mixing that had been the norm in earlier years when the center square was alive and functioned as the community meeting place.

Most of those who believed that the community was healthy also spoke positively about the benefits that new development had brought to the town. The town had been modernized, there were new jobs and generally “more to do”. For these people there was a bright future for the town, and its community was alive, well, and open to change. The development of the town, even if it had brought some destruction, had also a good side. Perhaps it was simply a case of tradeoffs, one style of living for another. For some, the new Fauston represented a better style of living.
In any case, it seemed a trade had occurred, whether one style of community for another or the community itself for the new developments. But, had the respective merits and faults of the options been adequately determined and assessed? Had it been a conscious trade? The general attitude was that for better or worse, the changes and developments in Fauston were inevitable. It seems that the town had responded to new developments on an ad hoc basis with only the vague goal of “improvement”. What did the people of Fauston define as improvement? Is a bigger road in itself an improvement? Or does that depend upon what the road brings with it? Is the destruction that goes with building a large road always a worthwhile cost? Do the new malls, the influx of large chain stores and other business developments represent an overall improvement over the small retail businesses that had once filled the town center? Do the types of interaction facilitated by the new developments - the changed structure of the town, the new forms of communication and the increased mobility of the people - nourish and sustain the community? Or do these factors replace only partial elements of a now lost community? Do they represent only fleeting experiences of an artificial community? Do any of these concerns matter, if overall, most people are materially better off? Isn’t that what ‘really’ counts? These types of questions complicate both my understanding of the changes that Fauston and towns like it have gone through in recent history, and my interpretation of peoples responses to the changes.

Many of those who were content with the material changes in their town did express misgivings about the overall balance of positive and negative effects of these changes. When issues of well being outside of material considerations were stressed in conversation, many voiced a myriad of complaints about modern society: the fast pace of living, over work, less
time for family and friends, greed, and similar concerns. Some linked social ills such as crime, drugs, divorce, and a rising level of general incivility, to the emphasis that our culture places upon money, progress and productivity. Many seemed of two minds. They were supportive of the new developments and emphasized rising material benefits, yet they associated these developments with negative and destructive behaviors that threaten the quality of the community as well as individual well being.

Despite their conflicting attitudes, the actions of the townsfolk were clearly supportive of the changes associated with the materialistic culture. They actively participated in and supported what I call the “production - consumption” lifestyle and all the structures and organizations which promote and profit from it - the “system” from here on. They shopped in the malls, they ate in the fast food restaurants, they bought the subdivision houses, took the factory jobs and all the overtime they could get. What are the real values here? Also since so many responded with a feeling that they had no say in how the town changed, or that the changes, like them or not, were inevitable, I wondered how authentic are the apparent changes of the ‘will of the people’. How autonomously is that will formed? How can most residents accept with so little protest, or perhaps not even notice, the destruction that corresponds with these changes?

The Rhetoric of Community

The notion of community in America is imbued with emotional, historical and political significance. The community is where individuals are socialized and learn the core values of the society. The small agrarian based communities steeped in the Jeffersonian ethos of rural virtue have been idealized as the source of legitimation for America’s democracy. Historically the existence of local communities, as the building blocks of
consensus, has been considered fundamental to the system and functioning of a
Jeffersonian style of democracy. As separate political units, they provide the foundation for
geographical representation by local districts. This reflects Jefferson's ideal of face to face
discussions in small publics or "wards" across the country as the ultimate arbiters of
government policies and power [Arendt 1984:243].

When the term 'community' is used in the popular press and in the speeches of
politicians, what is often evoked are the nostalgic images of small town America, such as
those depicted in the illustrations of Norman Rockwell. There is tremendous nostalgia for
the idealized small town in America [Gans 1988:112]. These idealizations of small town
America and as often, the notion of a better past, have also been criticized and largely
disputed by many social and political researchers [Coonze 1997]. Still, the public's idyllic
images continue as mental templates upon which current experience is impressed. As
powerful images, they are often used to enhance the appeal of products or draw public
support for issues or political candidates.

In the recent presidential campaign, community and other associated terms were
used by both of the candidates to draw upon a powerful public sentiment for the images and
the values they evoke. Bob Dole for example, stressed his roots in the rural small town of
Russell, Kansas. In the following statement from his announcement speech for the US.
presidency, Dole allies himself clearly with public sentiment for small town America and the
values that are associated with it:

"There's no place like home. But for me the words have a very special
meaning. Wherever I have traveled in this life, I have never forgotten where I
came from, or where I go home to, and that's very important." [Dole 1997]
This kind of rhetoric has become standard fare; if you want to get elected, you talk about your small town roots, belief in community and community values. The community rhetoric affiliates the candidate and as often a product, with the “Jeffersonian ethos which holds rural virtues to be higher than the ways of the city...” [Mill 1956:39]. It connects the speaker with the concerns of the common citizen, with the traditional idea of democratic power arising from the autonomously formed will of many small publics. The talk of small town roots suggests patriotism and morality, and enhances an image of trustworthiness. Americans by and large trust their national myths more than reality.

A central theme in Clinton’s 1992 campaign, was “the spirit of community” [Etzioni 1993:119]. In 1996, Clinton and the Democratic party expanded this theme, embracing the idea of a modern global society, a ‘global village’ - the community writ large. They promoted a competitive, technological, globalizing, market with an eye toward new forms of community, in partnership with and enhanced by, productivity and technology. The Democrats projected a traditional American positive view of the future. They projected confidence in the strength of traditional values and insinuated that these values would continue to inform new forms of community, and maintain civility amidst a rapidly changing, always progressing, and pluralistic society.

In the 1996 campaign, capitalizing on the appeal of community rhetoric, the Republicans also latched on to the sound bite appeal of ‘the spirit of community’. Their approach was somewhat less upbeat than the Democrat’s. They seemed preoccupied with the problems of modern society, addressing the breakdown in family values, morality, civility, as associated with certain trends in the present society. Again, in announcing his candidacy for President of the United States, Dole said:
"The view many Americans see this morning is a sobering one. We are troubled about the direction our country is taking. Our values are under constant assault from our public and cultural institutions. We feel threatened by the random incidence of violent crime. Too many of our schools, which were once passports to opportunity, have become demoralizing places. Welfare has become a misery subsidy, fostering illegitimacy and generations of dependency." [Dole 1997]

The idea of community projected by the political rhetoric, seems to indicate that it is something natural to the experience of local America, not an ideology delivered from the top down: "Kansans never had to look to Washington, D.C. for a sense of compassion or community" [Dole 1997]. While embracing a similar belief to that of the Democrats in the merits of economic and technological progress, the Republicans seemed to keep one eye turned to the past. They praised a type of localized community as the source of political ideas, industry and the core values of American society. It is the greatness produced in small community units that in the aggregate, produces a great nation: "power and wealth alike have flowed from grass-roots Americans to a federal government" [Dole 1997].

America exists in the towns and communities:

"You see many things from atop the Hill in Washington where I work, but you can see America from here, you can see America from here" [Dole 1997].

While both parties asserted the necessity and the goodness of community, neither clearly defined what they actually meant by the term. In both cases ‘community’ was used for its rhetorical power to assuage what is perhaps only a fleeting moment of public concern for a lost sense of community, while garnering trust and sentiment for the candidate who seemed most representative of the values and traditions it represents. Despite this agreement between the parties, it is possible to discern a fundamental difference in Clinton’s and Dole’s perspective and definition of community.
Dole and the Republicans seemed to have a more traditional view of community as corresponding to a specific locality - a territorially based definition. Their focus seemed closer to the particular subject and they spoke of the larger society as if they were looking outward from within a small town. They stressed the qualities of the local community, and the traditional values generated by the interactions that these communities encourage. This corresponds with their rhetoric against big centralist government, (but not with their support of big business) and against the proliferation of urban values that they associate with an increasing immorality in modern American society.

The definition of community that Clinton and the Democrats project, seems to be that of a transcendent community, not locally bound, progressive, changing, expanding and encompassing the whole of society. They seem to approach the idea of community from an exterior and wide perspective. This corresponds with their future oriented, 21st century talk of a ‘global village’, ‘global economy’, and ‘global community’. Clinton’s understanding of community seems somewhat reflective of the communitarianism popularized in Amiti Etzioni’s 1993 book, The Spirit of Community - as an ideal, achievable on a national scale.

This difference is mirrored in an ongoing debate about definitions of community in the field of community research. There also, a general division exists between those who attach community to a specific locality and those who see it as transcending locality.

Perspective also influences both public and academic understandings of community. The angle and distance that researchers stand in relation to the subject can have a significant effect on their results [Gans 164]. The debate over definition in the academic literature and the effects of perspective highlight the complexity of the meaning of ‘community’. How this
might affect the politics of community, or our understanding of the condition of our communities and the problems that they face, is a relevant concern to the present study.

My views about the changes in Fauston and other small towns and how those changes might be affecting the communities in a negative way are influenced by my own perspective, looking at the community from the outside as an object of study and my adherence to ‘place’ definitions of community. Accordingly, I treat the locale and the social interactions within it as a comprehensive whole. In The Great Good Place, Ray Oldenburg writes:

“The tyrannical force of the physical environment is revealing itself slowly to Americans. . . . Experiences occur in places conducive to them, or they do not occur at all . . . the breadth of experience may be sharply curtailed by an inadequate habitat. . . . The environment in which we live . . . is an active, dictatorial force that adds experiences or subtracts them according to the way it has been shaped.” [Oldenburg 1989: 294-6]

The actual physical destruction and the erosion of the significance of locality has direct consequences for the web of social interactions whose locus of convergence both define and are in turn defined by that particular locality. If certain structures and environments facilitate community, then when these factors are disrupted the interactions they supported also suffer. In the field of community studies, theoretical separation of the locale and its qualities from the interactions of the people, hides the interdependencies between people and place.

From this perspective, community, apart from place, is an artificial, misleading and convenient construction. Reified by popular, political and academic usage, the illusory concept of the nongeographic community may obscure our view or distract our attention from the destruction of real community. It may also distract attention from the destruction
of environment and the loss of other social goods associated with place. Furthermore, a positive attitude toward nongeographic definitions of community may smooth out the controversial effects of ‘progress’ upon communities. This enhances the apparent benefits of certain kinds of developments, enabling them to overshadow their negative and destructive side. These objections inform the following discussion of community, which attempts to relate the academic controversy, and my own beliefs and expectations, to the reported experiences of community in Fauston. Certain political implications arising from within this discussion will also be indicated. Further on, it will be suggested that these controversies may be contained within an understanding of a larger trend, one which has broader implications for the social and political character of America.

Community: A Controversial Concept

According to territorially based definitions of community, ‘place’ as well as the people and their interactions are regarded as comprising a whole. Each is integral to the formation and existence of community. Forms of association such as those fostered by organizations, various ‘political communities’, ‘professional communities’, and now ‘internet communities’, may have strong interactive components but fundamentally diverge from the above definition in that they do not include and are not rooted in a specific location.

If community is defined to include the various networks of people communicating in cyberspace for instance, the decline of a local community might seem to be positively offset by the growth in new, perhaps more creative ways of communing facilitated by developments in communications technology. If one holds to a more traditional definition of community - the relationships, bonds, interactions, structures and institutions of people in a
relationships through which a localized population provides its daily requirements” or “comprising that area, the resident population of which is interrelated and integrated with reference to its daily requirements” [Hawley 1950:180,257]. He regards the community as the basic unit of ecological organization. “It is in fact, the least reducible universe within which ecological phenomena may be adequately observed” [Hawley180]. Also stressing the aspect of locale according to social systems theories, in The Community In America, Roland Warren defines community as “that combination of social systems which perform the major social functions having locality relevance” and further on as a structure of interrelated parts operating as a unit in time and “it can be distinguished from surrounding environment, performing a function of boundary maintenance” [Warren 1972:134,136]. In all three of these concepts locality is integral to the definition of community.*

On the other side of the controversy, community is regarded as “network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds” [Bender, 1978:7]. Interactions relating to a specific locale are only one of many patterns of community and people may participate in many different communities simultaneously [Bender 6]. It is argued that modern transportation, modern communications and the expansion of extraterritorial organizations such as the international corporations, make contacts between people outside of locale commonplace, delinking place from community. In The Spirit of Community, Amitai Etzioni describes “work-based” and “professional communities” [Etzioni 121]. Other critics of ‘place’ definitions of community argue that mass society integrates people into the central values and institutional systems of society. This idea looks for community in interactive networks wherever they occur. “As mass society, community transcends the local

* In later editions Warren moves toward a non territorial definition of community.
transportation, modern communications and the expansion of extraterritorial organizations such as the international corporations, make contacts between people outside of locale commonplace, delinking place from community. In *The Spirit of Community*, Amitai Etzioni describes “work-based” and “professional communities” [Etzioni 121]. Other critics of ‘place’ definitions of community argue that mass society integrates people into the central values and institutional systems of society. This idea looks for community in interactive networks wherever they occur. “As mass society, community transcends the local society” [Wilkinson 21]. Community, in this sense, is a societal goal, not a localized phenomenon.

Looking for the qualities of community outside of a territorial frame is problematic for several reasons. First, though people may develop a variety of relations that transcend locality, they still live and interact on the local level and therefore still give rise to territorially delineated communities however weakened these may be. Secondly, those seeking the “communitarian nexus” in professional and other types of groups, fail to make a clear distinction between ‘association’ and ‘community’ [Etzioni 121]. Wilkinson distinguishes “community” as integral to “the common living of social beings” [Wilkinson 28]. He defines “association” as an established “organization of social life” for the “pursuit of one or more common interests” [Wilkinson 28]. In associations, interests are specialized and instrumental. ‘Association’ seems a more apt name for many of the types of relations which may fulfill some of the social and moral functions of the traditional community but are neither stable nor comprehensive enough to warrant designation as community. Finally, those who allow an expansion of the definition of community to include the whole of society seem to deny a fundamental aspect of community - that of experienced relations,
actual and repeated interaction between people [Wilkinson 21]. I question how a person can relate to mass society as anything but a set of images? The local community is tangible and is part of the immediate experience of a person. Robert Lynd, author of *Middletown*, held that the national society cannot replace the local community; according to Lynd it “is not a breeding ground for culture” [Holthoan 1995:57].

This academic debate about the definition of community mirrors the stresses that tear at the cohesion of the territorial community in modern society. As people become more mobile and range over a larger area, boundaries become fuzzier, more fluid, and territorial ties are weakened. Needs can be met at greater distances from home, often overlapping with other localities. The people of Fauston for instance, with improved transportation, now meet many of their basic daily needs in a larger neighboring town. The network of associations for meeting needs and expressing common interests within the community is complicated by these extra-local connections which may grow to be stronger and more influential than local ties [Wilkinson 5].

The community territory is defined by social interaction, and its boundaries are in flux according to the movements of the people. Paraphrasing Roland Warren, Wilkinson states:

“Trends in America representing the unfolding of a ‘Great Change’ are shifting the locus of systemic integration and equilibrium away from the community’s horizontal (local) axis and onto its vertical (extralocal) axis...Community subsystems tend to be tied more strongly to extracommunity systems than to one another...” [Wilkinson 32].

* Wilkinson is citing the arguments of other authors here: Martindale 1966, and Shils 1972.
This process of change entails the loosening of the internal cohesion among community subsystems. Once the territorial boundaries lose significance, community bonds begin to fracture. The local community is weakened, often to the point where it is hardly discernible. Warren goes as far as to say that "the local community is no longer a valid sociological concept" [Warren 404].

Evidence for Warren's description is found in the town of Fauston. There patterns of local interaction and the institutions that supported these patterns have been disrupted by increases in interactions along the community's vertical axis. The majority of the people I questioned or interviewed indicated little sense of strong community bonds in Fauston except around certain sports events or special community events such as the traditional fall fair. Many of those who deviated from this attitude - those with a positive assessment of the local community - were people directly involved in civic politics. Community in Fauston seems to coalesce around specific events and activities and within specific groups at certain times and then dissipate again. Community still exists, but it seems to do so only fleetingly; it is fragmented, lacks stability and is less comprehensive than in the past.

Whether there are compensations in the spread of other types of association that will fulfill the functions once filled by the local community, or whether 'community' is evolving and encompassing a larger territory, is certainly questionable. It is not certain that it has transformed into a new, equal or better version, nor that it is even in transition toward one. From the responses of residents, the evidence of new patterns of extralocal interaction, and the actual changes in the physical structure of the town, it is possible to conclude that at best only a weak version of community in the traditional sense, exists in Fauston. What the traditional community has been traded for is uncertain.
While as I expected, many of the residents of Fauston expressed dissatisfaction with the change in community, many also expressed satisfaction with other benefits that change had brought. Many appreciated what has been referred to as the liberation from “place chains” that better communications and better transportation have given them [Wilkinson 2]. This freedom from the bonds of the local community and its territory may benefit some members of the community in certain ways, yet still be detrimental to the group as a whole. Freedom from place chains, to the degree that it gives one a false sense of independence from local needs and concerns, may be a source of social irresponsibility. Too little communing among locals, too little community cohesion, can also be alienating for the individual and weaken the social self. “The self arises in interactions with specific others and expands in contact with what Mead calls the ‘generalized other’, or community” [Wilkinson 14]. To the degree that the health of the self is dependent upon interactions within the local community, it is also affected by the relative health of the community. Too much detachment from the community may be detrimental to one’s own social self, perhaps leading to the sense of alienation that is often associated with living in modern urban society. There is a mutually sustaining, interdependent relationship between the individual and the community. From this perspective viewing the individual as separable from the local community and thereby highlighting competition between the two, proceeds from a misapprehension of reality; ‘freedom from place chains’ may represent the positive framing of an initial stage of alienation.

As mentioned above some Fauston residents expressed appreciation of the opportunities and choices that the new developments have brought in terms of employment

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*Wilkinson citing Jaqueline Scherer.*
and consumer goods. Some of these residents agreed that the combination of technological progress and economic development, connections with larger centers, larger enterprises, had fragmented the territorial community, but had also brought improved living standards. The fragmentation of the traditional community is, at least for some, coincident with more choice in one’s associations, more conveniences, more products, a higher standard of living, and again, freedom of bondage to the local territory [Wilkinson 20].

Do the benefits loom so large that the costs are barely noticed? Is economic development on its own a higher value than a healthy community? Prior to the turn of the century, Ferdinand Toennies expressed concern that the economic forces of industry and corporate enterprise represented an “inevitable, almost evolutionary trend in which the business relations of Gesellschaft were displacing the communal ones of Gemeinschaft” [Gans 65]. Are the changes in Fauston indicative of this trend? In Knowledge For What. Robert Lynd also refers to our preoccupation with industrial production and technology.

“It is as if, in our preoccupation with driving ships faster and faster, we were filling the interior and decks with more and more machinery, leaving the passengers for whom the ships are run, crowded forward in the steerage” [Lynd, 1939:69].

The importance of community for human well being is well recognized. Yet the health of the community is left largely to chance - to survive, change or collapse depending on the forces of the market and economic development, forces generally managed by powers outside the community.

**Shifting Concepts and Shifting Power**

One charge against the traditional locale based definition of community is that “localism as an ideology” serves the interests of the local elite [Wilkinson 21].” The idea is

*Wilkinson citing arguments of others.*
that "solidarity on a locality basis suppresses the expression of real interests of classes other than the local elite" [Wilkinson 21]. In this view, community at the local level is an expression of class domination. Furthermore, the authors assert that because "the power of the dominant class can extend even to shaping the wants and wishes of others...class hegemony can create a false appearance of community cohesion" [Wilkinson 21]. Localism may serve the local elite. However, the greater danger is that the removal of the criteria of locale from the concept of community may serve the interests of a national or global elite.

Redefining community without the chains of place may be a way of hiding recognition of the degree to which the community in small towns like Fauston all over the country has been disrupted by the encroachment of powerful national and international interests. Are our 'wants and wishes' for community reshaped to fit with the structure of the mass market - the domain of large corporate interests - and the speedy technology that services them? Have those who do social sciences been co-opted by the elite whose interests these developments serve?

The notion that 'locale' based definitions of community serve the local elite overlooks the impediment that territorially bound communities, with all their faults, presented to the hegemony of a national elite. It can be argued that criticizing localism serves the interests of the national elite by eroding the insulation that locale provided for the community against the massifying powers of outside influences. The charge against the ideology of localism and the local elite diverts attention from the larger threat - domination from a faceless national-global elite that brooks no bounds.

The local elite has a face and a tangible presence in the community. They are part of the immediate experience and share in an interdependent relationship among community
residents. There is a great deal of reliance upon personal loyalty in a small community. Their behavior is scrutinized by the locals and even the local banker’s monopoly over local capital is not impervious to the opinions and protests of local residents. A local merchant needs the loyalty and goodwill of the local residents in order to survive. The local elite is likely to be subject to local opinion to a far greater extent in their attempts to shape the wants and wishes of the locals than the elite at the distant head offices of a multinational corporation.

National and global elite, like national and global society, are abstract, beyond the experience and out of reach to a local population. They are not dependent to any significant degree upon any one community and can afford to be unresponsive to the will of any particular community. The newly dominant corporate giants do not operate for the benefit of the local community. They operate and move according to a rationale that corresponds to their purpose which is to dominate the market and make money. Their size and scope gives the multinational corporations an overarching influence over all communities, gradually eroding the hold of local institutions and injecting in their place the standardized institutions of corporate business culture and global media. Local institutions, vertically integrated and supportive of the community, are weakened by the injection of the standardized institutions of American corporation business culture along the community’s vertical axis. In effect, gemeinschaft types of relations are limited by the increasing dominance of gesellschaft relations.

Another important attribute of a shift in power to outside interests is that there is a weakening of the capacity of the local community as “a powerful natural bond” to highlight and demand a challenge to inequality [Wilkenson 25]. Accord to Wilkenson:
"This bond exists even where its expression is suppressed and even where dominant and dominated groupings appear to be locked into a system of accommodation and inequality. Community is the natural force that breaks down such a system” and

“the local territory is where class and community dynamics are played out” [Wilkinson 25].

If Wilkinson is correct in giving the community credit for this kind of check on domination, and as the venue where social issues are given expression, then the dispersion of interaction beyond the local territory of traditionally defined community, may aid and abet the dominance of an elite group over the mass of society.

Summary

Community still exists, even in places like Fauston where the gutted town structures suggest abandonment. There is still some convergence of people living and interacting as they go about satisfying their daily needs. What is questionable is the quality of community supported within the given locality. The residents of Fauston held different and often conflicting opinions about the condition of their community. Those who felt it had deteriorated like the buildings in the town square, missed the street life of the Saturday morning trip to town and other ritualized opportunities for encounter commonly associated with community living. They complained about being too busy to get together with their neighbors. In contrast, reflecting the American belief in progress, that “things are getting better all the time” (my ital.), were those who praised opportunities that new commercial developments had brought to the town [Lane 1962:207]. They thought the community was adequately nourished and represented in organized community events. Then there were
those who seemed to care little for community affiliations. They disliked the oppressiveness of localism and preferred anonymity in their contacts both within and outside of the locale.

The concept of community may be loosened from geographical place in both academic and popular discourse, but this may have political implications. The individual may be conceptually loosened from the bonds of locale and perhaps the dominance of the local elite, but is that all that is lost? Does changing our understanding of the community interfere with the opportunity for contradictions to arise? Does it alter our perspective that prevents certain negative developments to rise up in our view and confront us - to bring out in stark relief damage and loss, and draw attention to the beneficiaries and the institutions that profit at the expense of local unity and distinctiveness? Does redefining community enable the destruction of community to go on uncontested, as the illusion of new types of community replaces the old reality and appears to bring more opportunity and a higher quality of life?

Community still makes a good sound bite. The nostalgia for small town America and the communities they accommodated is very powerful. Though the evidence is mixed, these neighborly scenarios - geographically contained, cohesive and comprehensive units of communing locals - appear to be disintegrating. There is a drift away from the distinctive, individuated towns and their community. The idealized sources of grass roots American politics that get conjured up at election time are now mostly fantasy. This fantasy also distracts attention and allays critical notice of the degree of damage that has been done to the towns and community in America. People are distracted from noticing the degree of homogenization, central planning and control, that has come to characterize American society. Instead of the Jeffersonian ideal of a collection of small publics, today’s society
appears more like a market coordinated network of standardized enterprise zones on the service nodes of a mass production system.
CHAPTER II: A DRIFT TOWARD MASS SOCIETY?

In The Community in America, Roland Warren describes a “Great Change” in America’s community:

“It is a thesis of this book that the ‘great change’ in community living includes the increasing orientation of local community units toward extracommunity systems of which they are a part, with a corresponding decline in community cohesion and autonomy.” [Warren 1973:53]

Warren’s assessment of the change underway in America’s communities corresponds with what other authors, such as C. Wright Mills, have called the movement toward “mass society” [Mills 1956]. It was my belief that the changes that Fauston had undergone in the past 25 years had been detrimental to the town and its community. An amalgam of market forces (often lumped together as ‘progress’), had brought destruction to existing town structures and weakened community bonds. These were replaced with the standardized structures and organization of the modern mass market. The debate about the health of the community notwithstanding, Fauston clearly exhibits the characteristics of the trend toward a mass society that C. Wright Mills criticized in the 1950’s:

“From almost any angle of vision that we might assume, when we look upon the public we realize that we have moved a considerable distance along the road to the mass society.... There is a movement from widely scattered little powers to concentrated powers and the attempt at monopoly control from powerful centers, which being partially hidden, are centers of manipulation as well as of authority. The small shop serving the neighborhood is replaced by the anonymity of the national corporation, mass advertisement replaces the personal influence of opinion between merchant and customer.” [Mills 305]

The managerial world of corporate conformity, the dominating economic and technological influences from the macrosystem, bring more material success at the cost of local
The ‘malapolizing’ of America has flattened out the differences between varied regional geographies and architectures, giving the entire nation a homogenous appearance. Previously, the particular building materials indigenous to a locality often gave it a distinctive look: now large building materials companies dominate most regions with standardized materials. The malls come in a few basic functional designs, with little or no concern for environmental fit or other aesthetic qualities. The structures housing the chain restaurants, chain motels and chain service stations are standardized and mass produced, delivering the same standardized mass produced product in each location nationwide. The businesses (usually chain organizations themselves) which service these chain operations, the employees, and even the customers, all interact with the unit in a predictable predesigned manner. Driving through and ordering a ‘number 2 combo’, is repeated with the same words and motions, by thousands of people, thousands of times a day, across the country. The structures, the products, the organization, the employee training, are all designed to facilitate efficient administration. Regularity and sameness are attributes that make for easy and efficient administration of mass production and mass consumption.

Corporate Power In Mass Society

Technology has enabled the large corporation to negate geography and, in effect, shrink time. The financial resources of the corporation enable it to overwhelm smaller enterprises. The sheer size and “the dominance of getting a living” in peoples lives, promote its culture [Lynd 1929:21]. The size of its employment, and of its contribution to national income give it practical and political clout. The modern corporation is involved in all areas of living, Mill states:

“Corporations command raw materials, and the patents on inventions which turn them into products...they employ man as a producer and they make that which he
buys as a consumer. They clothe him and feed him and invest his money. They make that which he fights the wars and they finance the ballyhoo of advertisement and the obscurantist bunk of public relations that surround him . . . Their private decisions . . . determine the size and shape of the national economy, the level of employment, the purchasing power of the consumer, the prices that are advertised, the investments that are channeled . . . If they do not reign, they do govern at many of the vital points of everyday life in America.” [Mills 124-125].

The national and multinational corporations organize and manipulate markets, including small towns, to extract profits. There is a stratification of places, according to the profit profiles determined by the corporation’s own internal rationale, strategy and information. The specialized uses that the outside corporation determines for an area, leads to dependency, one industry dominance, instability and uneven development that goes with it [Wilkinson 9]. New developments in transportation and communication, coupled with market expansion, tend to connect separate economic parts of a local community directly with the centralized control of larger economic units in the larger society. The connections are made to separate parts of the local community, not with the community as a whole [Wilkinson 34]. Connected directly to large centers, the fate of certain sectors of local economy are determined directly by the decisions in national and often international centers. Consequently, there is less interdependence among the parts of a community and the fate of those parts is determined by powers beyond the local scene.

Small towns, because of their relative weakness within a larger predatory economic system, are extremely vulnerable to the impact of large business activities within their local region. One company can dominate the market in a small town. It is easy to see the evidence of this in Fauston. There, one large corporate retailer, Wal-Mart, moved in and extracted the majority of retail business from the community, absorbing the income into its
national corporate structure. The small businesses that once lined main street and the town square are now gone. There is also the saga of industry closings which leave 'one industry towns' devastated. There is a well documented history of this process, involving different industries at different times in America's history. Certainly the saga of industry closings will continue in the future, even in the bullish high tech industry towns that thrive today.

Modern technology has been a boon to the spread of the large multinational corporation, connecting the parts of the organization together no matter how distant and connecting markets together no matter how disparate. The marriage of business with technology, and the world wide reduction of governmental barriers to the movement of goods and capital, enables the largest actors within this system to immediately affect people's lives anywhere on the globe. The decisions of the major corporate players can be quickly transformed into effects, in small places like Fauston across the world. When a large corporation suffers a loss in overseas orders, it may immediately decide to downsize or eliminate some of its domestic production facilities. Some small community may then be devastated by the closing of the local production facility. With modern technology, economic rationalization is immediately transferred throughout the system.

Technology also "changes what is possible" [Goldhaber 39]. A corporation may adopt a new technology that will render a whole group of workers obsolete. A small town like Fauston is at the mercy of the companies who provide work but can move or develop technology to replace the need for Fauston's workers if the exigencies of business demand it. The rationality of the mass production system dictates such actions. Any other response would be 'unreasonable'. 
The Organization of the Mass Productive System Dominates Community Life

The habits, mentality, behaviors and organization of people at the local level are coordinated with those in the larger society through the organized system of mass enterprise that dominates the national society. People are related hierarchically according to their functional qualities, quantifiable in market terms. People are "freed" from "the 'natural' hierarchy of personal dependence and related . . . as units of abstract labor power, calculable in units of time" [Marcuse 157]. The practical manifestation of this rationality was observed by the Lynds in their "Middletown" study:

"As the study progressed it became more and more apparent that the money medium of exchange and the cluster of activities associated with its acquisition, drastically condition the other activities of the people." [Lynd 1929:21]

Peoples lives are more defined by the economic activity of earning a living than any other activity. In many small towns the factory job is the main activity associated with acquisition of money.

The systematized routines employed in factory style production, in the words of Robert Lynd, "drastically conditions the other activities of the people." This conditioning was brought to life for me in an informal conversation with the former owner of a textile mill in Fauston. He stated that when the factory opened in the 1930s, there was a problem with absenteeism. It seemed that many of the workers were unaccustomed to the steady, fixed hours required by organized factory style production. They were accustomed to working sporadically or according to the nature-imposed schedules of farming. Also many of the workers were women, and therefore conflicts would likely have arisen between the factory schedule and the demands of their household and farm chores. It seems it was only when they developed a taste for consumer goods (or became subject to the steady demands
of consumer debt) that they adjusted the rest of their lives to the routines of modern factory style production.

As a society we have moved so far along in this style of organizing work, that we forget that it has involved an ongoing process of human adjustment. That process of adjustment continues today as the domination of getting a living continues to subject us to the ever increasing demands of the system of production. How well do we understand these adjustments? What do we sacrifice in order to adjust? Do we have a choice?

"Mass production and mass distribution claim the entire individual, and industrial psychology has long ceased to be confined to the factory. The manifold processes of introjection seem to be ossified in almost mechanical reactions." [Marcuse 10]

"The machine process in the technological universe breaks the innermost privacy of freedom and joins sexuality and labor in one unconscious, rhythmic automatism." [Marcuse 27]

The above quotes from Herbert Marcuse’s One Dimensional Man, indicate how deeply the influence of modern mass industrial society cuts into the inner psyche of the individual. The depth of this influence is exposed in the way our sense of time or “living rhythms” are shaped by the “monopolizing time and energy demands of work” [Lynd 1939:43]. The rhythms of the individual, the community, the entire culture, become patterned accord to the mechanical marking of production measured time [Lynd 1939:43]. Max Lerner, referring to the conditions of the modern industrial worker said “time is master” [Lane 229].

The habits, behaviors and rhythms of a community are harmonized and synchronized with the production schedules of industry. Those schedules are determined by other large players in the system, financial considerations, and the technological parameters peculiar to the particular industry. The individual is thus intimately connected through his or
her sense of time with the technology, mechanics, organization and the distant powers in the mass production system. The employees and the community wake with the factory clock and conduct their daily routines accord to the company's organization of time - according to the institutionalized rhythm of mass production. The minutes, hours, days, weeks and years of their lives, all structured according to the production system. Their experience of time is determined by the intervals marked out by the technological organization of the world productive apparatus, manifested in the micro workings of the local factory. When the factory closes, the adapted routines and patterns of community interaction are disrupted, both community and former employees are left disoriented in a strange new reality of unstructured time.

"We become like the mollusk, whose habits of burrowing in the sand and reappearing are conditioned by the movements of the ocean tide, and who, when removed from the beach to the laboratory, continues for several days in the same rhythm without the tide." (Robert Lynd) [Lynd 1939:43]

The degree of adjustment that the community as a whole must make to accommodate industry is exposed when a major employer in a small town closes. In those cases the community which first aligned itself with the organization of the company, now must readjust itself to accommodate the loss of the major employer. This usually means economic hardship for all the residents of the town, affecting both instrumental - gesellschaft relations, and personal, dependent - gemeinschaft relations, within the community. These effects have received much attention in the media but the criticism of any single aspect of life and any single authority having that much control over individual or community well being is rarely voiced. The general response to these closings is for the community to try to attract another big employer to fill the void left by the old one. Tax concessions are offered to attract the new business while the residents are taxed to finance
the service enhancements such as increases to power and sewer capacity, that the company needs for its operations. This type of response is described by Lynd in *Middletown*, as "a logical extension of old categories to the new situation" [Lynd 1929:501-2]. In Fauston this has been, and still is, the strategy used to build economic security for the town.

**Summary**

Small towns like Fauston and its citizens are vulnerable to the decisions of the corporate proxies of the productive superstructure. The dominance of the local elite gives way to the power and influence of a national elite. The self employed are turned into employees [Marcuse 53]. As the town is absorbed into the mass market system it also becomes dependent upon the system and subject to the status it has in the system's hierarchy. The structural constraints of the system make it impossible for the community or the individual to challenge their particular role in system without also seriously undermining their position in the line of distribution [Connolly 1974:122-125].* This is the basis of the power in the mass system. It is structurally derived and wielded. It is not subtle.

Why, in our present advanced state of industry and technology - in our system of democracy - do we allow this kind of situation? It can be blamed on the market and then rationalized as a satisfactory price for the goods the market provides. As Marcuse states: "there is no reason to insist upon self determination if the administered life is the comfortable, even the good life" [Marcuse 49]. What is not rational is that a community's

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* Connolly states: "There is no means technically available to implement such changes without undermining the very capacity of the socio economic system to meet the elementary needs of the entire population.... We live in a system, therefore, where structural constraints (or contradictions) make it impossible for any segment of the society to act to redress the system of inequality significantly without disrupting the basic capacity of the entire system to provide food, shelter, and security for its members." [122]
choices should be framed in such a way that its options are between corporate needs and community survival. This is not choice; it is coercion.
CHAPTER III: DEMOCRACY AND COMMUNITY IN THE MASS SOCIETY

The power over individual and community that the market organized process of massification represents calls into question the status of democracy in America. In my interviews and discussions with many residents of Fauston, a statement I heard repeatedly in connection with negative changes to the town was: “Oh well, what can you do?” The residents seemed to express a sense of an overwhelming and inevitable process of change, determined by outside forces that they were powerless to do anything about. When I asked residents, “Do you feel you have had any say in how Fauston has changed over the years?”, the overwhelming response was a simple “no”. These responses are not surprising. This attitude of powerlessness seems now to have become an alarmingly common attitude and is often noted in the popular press. Without giving too much credence to the simple and unreflected responses of my narrow sampling, it is possible to say that there exists a general cynicism about the state of democracy in America. Individual Americans sense that their opinions are not heard and that there are few if any means to put their wishes into effect.

The myth and idealization of the Jeffersonian style of autonomous small deliberative publics forming the foundation of America’s democratic system is still evoked in the politician’s rhetoric about small town, “grass roots” democracy, but the statements of those small town citizens reflect neither the optimism nor the illusion of the politician’s rhetoric. The idealized small towns and the small deliberative publics are victims of the encroaching mass society, its centralized administration and homogenizing influence. Yet as a gimmick, the grass roots talk still sells the product. The myth is very powerful and America must hold on to it or risk drawing its fundamental beliefs, as well as some of its fundamental structures, into question. Mass society represents a way of organizing the public that Jefferson thought would lead to corruption [Padover 1946:70]. Jefferson envisioned the
small publics and the individual as 'political'. They were bodies of practical resistance to tyranny, corruption and the centralizing tendencies of a national social and political authority.

Reflecting many of the classic views of Jefferson, Mills defines public as:

“(1) Virtually as many people express opinions as receive them. (2) Public communications are so organized that there is a chance immediately and effectively to answer back any opinion expressed in public. Opinion formed by such discussion (3) readily finds an outlet in effective action, even against -if necessary- the prevailing system of authority. And (4) authoritative institutions do not penetrate the public, which is thus more or less autonomous in its operations.” [Mills 303]

This he contrasts with the “mass” where:

“(1) Far fewer people express opinions as receive them; for the community of publics becomes an abstract collection of individuals who receive impressions from the mass media. (2) The communications that prevail are so organized that it is difficult or impossible for the individual to answer back immediately or with any effect. (3) The realization of opinion in action is controlled by authorities who organize and control the channels of such action. (4) The mass has no autonomy from institutions; on the contrary agents of authorized institutions penetrate this mass, reducing any autonomy it may have in the formation of opinion by discussion.” [Mills 304]

The public, or community of publics as Mills has defined it, corresponds with the Jeffersonian idea of the public and the principles of deliberative democracy. This is far from what exists in America today.

In Political Ideology, Robert Lane opposes the classic view of small community democracy. He argues that:
"1 Community sentiments involve close and enduring loyalties of place and people; but politics based on friends and neighbors and loyalties to local parties make national rational and flexible politics more difficult.

2 Community makes for traditionalistic ways, for at the very core of the community idea is the sentimental attachment to the conventions and mores of a beloved place; but democracy is based upon the widespread distribution of questioning and criticism..."

3 Community reinforces and encapsulates a moral code...democracy...thrive on low moral tension where the question of blame is subordinated to understanding."

4 Community generates myth, lore, heroes, sagas, epics: these become embedded in the belief system and value system; men then employ them in their thinking, interpret current events in the light of these analogies. But modern democracy is more efficient in meeting the demands placed upon it when the events are interpreted by the common man, as well as the elite, in the cold light of a rational model, where cause and effect chains are seen, so far as possible, with reduced sentiment and poetry. At least it meets some of the demands better in this style.

[Lane 226-7] In the above statements, Lane is pointing to the complications that community poses for democratic process. It seems to follow from his criticism that a democratic system built upon a nation of small publics would be inefficient and yield irrational, sentiment laden decisions. The analysis offered here begs the question, what complications arise when community is rejected as a form of organizing the polity? Lane's opposition to community based democracy avoids recognition of the danger of a mass society where public opinion is fashioned by a conglomerate of one sided interests, where the national parties represent similar interests leaving little variance in available choices. The complications that arise from the pluralism supported by a community based democracy may also be its strengths when faced with the option of the market organized mass society. The following quote by
Berthold Brecht has relevance here: "Advocates of progress often have too low an opinion of what already exists." [Dorner 58]

The "widespread distribution of questioning and criticism" which Lane correctly asserts as a basis for democracy, is quite limited in a mass society. As Mill states: "In mass society, the dominant types of communication is the formal media, and the publics become media markets" [Mill 304]. The mass media chooses or highlights issues for discussion which are then deliberated over by media chosen experts. Occasionally a few 'ordinary' citizens may be questioned as a token gesture to public opinion, but there is no connection between these opinions and effective action. The real value of these token opinions lies in their effectiveness at perpetuating the myth of autonomous public opinion and their commodity quality as saleable entertainment. In the mass there may be widespread distribution of questioning and criticism, but the questions and criticisms are limited to those saleable to a wide and general audience. Widespread in this sense looks more like indoctrination than deliberation.

Lane also seems to present an urban elitist bias in his suggestion that community reinforcement of a moral code limits understanding which is necessary in a democracy. 'Closed mindedness' is not a necessary product of moral codes. It is an affective and cognitive function that uses moral codes and any number of other instruments, including rational models, to reduce and simplify complex issues. This anti-democratic tendency which Lane is correct to criticize, is not exclusive to community living. In any case, the subordination of "blame" to understanding does not seem to be a predominant characteristic of mass society. The mass of public opinion often exhibits very little understanding in its determination of blame. Currently, 'welfare bums' are blamed for America's fiscal
problems, and high taxes, yet all of welfare only accounts for 5% of the annual budget [Coonze 132]. It may be more likely that people classed as groups and presented as an impersonal abstract distant category are easier to blame than individuals with whom you are face to face in the community. In the community, you may be confronted by your own lack of understanding.

The “myths” to which Lane objects, are also prevalent in mass society and perhaps even more dangerous since they are less often recognized and involve a larger following. The media and its corporate sponsors are responsible for many myths which they create and manipulate to sway public opinion. In this case, rather than the many myths that might be created in many different communities, which would complicate the dominance of one single myth, it is one overarching myth for all, created and manipulated in the interest of one large powerful voice. This might make for a more “rational” and “efficient” process by narrowing choices but it is hardly more democratic.

There is merit to Lane’s criticism. Community based democracy has its problems. What is missing in Lane’s criticism, the above counter arguments notwithstanding, is recognition that the communities envisioned here are today largely mythical. It is no longer a question of whether community based democratic public is the best way of organizing the polity, but whether that which has replaced them is at odds with the stated traditional foundations of American democracy. The historical foundations, so often evoked in the present as legitimation for the status quo, are themselves contradictory to the present system of mass politics and the dominating influence of the mass market. Today the autonomous individual and the small autonomous, deliberating publics, exist only as conceptual
categories stripped of their contradictory qualities and used deceptively to import the believed virtues of the past and project them into the present system.

**Autonomy and Deliberation**

The principles of American democracy demand that citizens should make their own choices rather than leave those choices to others. Whether the others constitute an elite group or despot or the automatic pre-designed working of a particular system, it is the responsibility of the citizens to make their own choices. Classic American democracy assumes maximum autonomy in forming the preferences that determine these choices. It also depends upon a deliberative process amongst equal and autonomous citizens to legitimize political decisions. In Fauston, throughout the process of change that the town has undergone, these qualities of democracy seem to have been missing. In the article, “Was Democracy Just A Moment?”, Robert Kaplan states:

“We should...recognize...that the architectural reconfiguration of our cities and towns has been an undemocratic event - with decisions in effect handed down from above by an assembly of corporate experts.” [Kaplan 1997:73]

In “Preferences and Politics”, Cass Sunstein defines autonomous decisions as those

“reached with full and vivid awareness of available opportunities, with reference to all relevant information, and without illegitimate or excessive constraints on the process of preference formation.” [Sunstein, 1991:9]

As well, preferences should not be the products of “unjust background conditions” and “when these conditions are not met, decisions should be described as unfree or nonautonomous...” [Sunstein, 8,9]. The process of deliberation is also necessary to ensure that the relevant information, range of possibilities, the exposure of unjust conditions, coercion and restraints are exposed. Deliberation in the context of democracy involves the
sharing of information and the voicing of many different and contrary opinions. Within this process beliefs and preferences are shared, challenged, reflected upon, and refined into policy. In the process of deliberation, “new or submerged voices, or novel depictions of where interests lie and what they in fact are, are heard and understood” [Sunstein 15]. If there are no participatory processes, minority or dissenting voices cannot be heard. In that case, the dissent and synthesis of opinion which legitimates policy in a democracy has not occurred.

Without an adequate deliberation process there is little opportunity for individuals to recognize that some of their preferences may not be conducive to social well being. Or that some preferences are incompatible with one’s own democratic principles or metapreferences. From these realizations, one can make the autonomous decision to support a policy that may limit one’s own behavior. Limitation legitimized by free, reasoned choice, exercised through conscious self restraint not through repression or oppression is the basis for a civil society.

Community Autonomy and Deliberation

The community in Fauston, understood according to the Jeffersonian ideal of many small republics comprising the larger one, would represent a separate entity within the polity [Arendt 243]. As such, it can be said to have an opinion - a voice, distilled through deliberation from the many individual voices within the community. That opinion, even if a minority within the larger republic, should not be subject to political intolerance.” [Padover (ed) 34]. Assessing the opinion of Fauston, according to the principles of autonomy and

"All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate which would be oppression.” Thomas Jefferson, 1st inaugural, March 4, 1801. [Padover (ed.) 34]
deliberation, involves looking at the opportunities for autonomous preference formation and opportunities for a deliberative process both for the individuals who make up that public, and for Fauston taken as a single voice within the public of publics that comprise the nation.

Does Fauston have the autonomy and the opportunity to deliberate with other `publics’ in choosing its destiny and shaping the environment within which its choices are made? Specifically, considering the powerful influences of mass enterprises and the general ordering of communities according to the designs of the “productive superstructure” [Marcuse], does Fauston have the opportunity as an autonomous public, to deliberate with other communities locally or nationally, or with the powers that determine the economic organization of the society and Fauston’s role in the hierarchy?

Generally, the vague idea of `well being’ for its citizens serves as the foundation for the town’s preference formation. With this general interest in mind Fauston is compelled to scale down its desires to match the limited range of opportunities possible in the mass market society. Fauston must gamble its welfare on the market. The community must join the mass market and shape itself and its preferences in a fashion that is attractive to industry and market expansion in general. Otherwise it will be drained of its resources by job loss. The preference formation of Fauston and other communities like it are therefore excessively constrained by survival concerns.

Fauston also accepts the malls and attracts new factories without having all the relevant information. It does not know, for instance, the level or length of service that those enterprises will provide to the community in the future. A large retailer may eventually close its outlet in Fauston and expand one in a neighboring town to attract a greater number of customers from a larger area and reduce costs. Unless a new major retailer is interested
in moving into the vacated mall, the town will be stuck with more ugly dead retail space in addition to that around the town square which emptied when the mall originally opened. A new industry might offer jobs for the immediate future but within a relatively short period of time it may have to start laying off. Unforeseen changes in foreign markets might alter the company’s operating rationale, leading to a cut back in production. If the labor is cheap enough and skilled enough the company may keep its production in Fauston and choose to reduce production elsewhere. Then some other community must endure a loss.

The future of the market is unpredictable, even to the bosses at head office, but when the time comes to make decisions, head office, not those representing Fauston’s interests, will make the relevant decisions. They will deliberate with their bankers, accountants, lawyers, and in some cases, a local representative of a national union. The community usually becomes involved in these deliberations if it is willing and able to offer tax concessions or free services to improve the company’s competitive position. It is not an equal in the deliberation process, yet when the local branch of a large multinational closes, the community absorbs more than its share of the hardship.

In the system of national and international competition, the community, through an elected representative, may engage in deliberations with other communities within its region. But these discussions are usually dominated by development issues, defined again by the community’s position within the market ordered hierarchy and its instrumental value to a system that is devoted to production, not the well being of the community. Of what value is the community to the market and specific powerful players in the market? These are the conditions that narrow Fauston’s options. The deliberations of communities are subject to the unchallenged premise that the market rules.
Within the context of the market ordered system the community is also relatively powerless because of its lack of wealth. In a poor community the restraint upon its preference formation is already excessive due to survival concerns, but it also will have a smaller voice at the table in any process of deliberation with other communities or powerful agents of the productive system. Its opportunity to get its opinion out to other communities is limited by its ability to purchase that voice from the mass media or to fund any other methods of delivering its ideas. The Supreme Court's decision in Buckley v. Valeo, gives First Amendment legitimation to the distorting effects of wealth in the political process [424 U.S. 1976]. 'Free speech' has become somewhat of an oxymoron in America. Rather than a guarantee of open deliberation and critical opinion, the First Amendment has become the vehicle for the translation of economic inequalities into political ones [Sunstein 28].

If the beliefs and preferences that determine choice are not freely developed, then freedom is impaired [Sunstein 11]. The lack of viable alternatives to the role offered in the scheme of the encroaching mass market, and the limited opportunity to deliberate over alternatives or the lack of alternatives, suggests that the system within which the community must choose is, according to democratic principles, of questionable legitimacy. This arrangement also negates Jefferson's republican ideal that rural communities, in their independent capacities as little republics, would check any tendency toward domination by one group or by the excesses of the majority. Of course the whole discussion of freedom of the community assumes the sovereignty of the community. Mill points to the conceptual duplicity that arises from the turn into a mass society:

"Despite the rhetoric practiced by many Congressional spokesmen, no local society is in truth a sovereign locality. During the last century local society has become
part of a national economy; its status and power hierarchies have come to be subordinate parts of the larger hierarchies of the nation.” [Mill 391]

Individual Autonomy and Deliberation

America’s system of democracy assumes that the individual citizens who make up the community, are able to form preferences and beliefs autonomously. According to the principles of America’s democracy, the citizens must have the opportunity to engage in effective deliberation with other members of the community about their preferences and beliefs as well as the developments that affect their living and working environment. The preference formation of citizens under the domination of the mass market system, like community, are conditioned by the market system’s manipulation of the basic needs for survival and market created needs. Therefore, their preferences may be the products of what has been referred to as “unjust background conditions” or “unjustifiable constraints” on the free development of their preferences and beliefs [Sunstein 8, 11].

Individual survival within the community is linked to the prospects for jobs that may come with an influx of corporate development. The individual cannot be too resistant toward corporate developments nor be too selective about which they will accept. Within the market system, they are conditioned to think that they must work or starve. It is hard to accept as autonomous many pro development decisions when survival and development are linked through the threat of poverty. In the present mass culture of materialism and conformity, poverty appears as a veiled form of annihilation. Basically the autonomous formation of preferences is hindered by the insecurity that is at the base, and a major engine of the free enterprise system. This quality of the system is a real concern for the democracy when it becomes a tool of domination in the hands of the few over the many. As the large corporations gain more control over the provision of employment, either directly or by
controlling the conditions that govern the options for employment, as they gain more
control in shaping the needs and wants of the society which determine the need for specific
types of work, they become the main arbiters of this insecurity. Hence individual
preferences will be conditioned to favor developments appearing to offer relief from this
insecurity. The citizens of Fauston, while subject to the necessity of work, have little or no
uncoerced input into the factors that make work available in their community. They can
decide individually to join collectively with the others in the community and make enticing
offers to lure prospective employers to their area but since this is hardly a decision for
which there were other options, it is a stretch to call it autonomous. In the integrated mass
market, decisions about work in local areas are made outside of the locale by actors who are
largely insulated from the will of the local people.

The citizens of Fauston are also subject to the “heteronomous needs and
satisfactions which organize life in this society” [Marcuse 245]. In One Dimensional Man,
Marcuse writes:

“In the most highly developed areas of contemporary society the transplantation of
social into individual needs is so effective that the difference between them seems
to be purely theoretical.” [Marcuse, 8]
The fabricated needs and wants of the mass consumer society are powerful incentives for
aligning preferences with the needs of industry. In short, people are taught to want, because
it is good for business. Furthermore, what’s good for business is good for the nation. In
Middletown, the Lynds took special notice of the following statement by a leading
Middletown newspaper: “The American citizen’s first importance to his country is no
longer that of a citizen but that of a consumer. Consumption is a new necessity” [Lynd
1929:88].
If the individual’s first function in the system is as a consumer then preferences are dominated by market choices, which do not adequately reflect political preferences. Consumption choices are products of the willingness, or rather ability, to pay. They are usually determined solely by individual self interest, thus discounting the possibility for altruistic political preferences. “Metapreferences”- preferences about preferences and higher order values may not be reflected in consumer behavior [Sunstein 13]. Those citizens of Fauston for instance, who were politically opposed to development, made contrary consumer choices which supported those developments.

Most of the people I spoke with in Fauston did not question the direction of change in their community - that there could be a different way of organizing the system. Where in this society is there a powerful influence that reaches deeply into the citizen’s psyche and promotes a non consumer ethic? There are weak voices, but since they do not accept “the way it is”, they are often considered only marginally sane. This is a common response to beliefs in opposition to the establised order of the society and a powerful coercion to conform. Relegating one, if only by label, to an inferior or estranged position because of an opposing belief is undemocratic in spirit. It seems as though a great deal of time has passed since Jefferson wrote:

“Differences of opinion will arise from differences of perception, and the imperfection of reason; but these differences when permitted, as in this happy country, to purify themselves by free discussion, are but as passing clouds overspreading our land transiently, and leaving our horizon more bright and serene.” [Padover (ed.) 37-8].

Differences of opinion and differences in understanding are essential to a meaningful democracy. “Democracy does not imply homogeneity”[Goldhaber 125].
Conformity promotes more of the same; the lack of divergent lifestyles conditions preferences and promotes conformity. The move toward a mass society does not necessarily alleviate this problem by exposing people to other lifestyles. The gessellschaft relations common to mass society encourage involvement among people of similar interests and lifestyles. They may superficially notice others and their differences, but they do not need to engage them. Furthermore, the promotion of conformity, and the abridging of difference, is vital for the efficient administration of the mass market society.

The mass media represent perhaps the most serious impediment to the formation of autonomous preferences and beliefs. "Individual thought" is "absorbed by mass communication and indoctrination" [Marcuse 4]. The media brings the commercial influences directly into contact with the individual and on an almost constant basis. Marcuse asks:

"Can one really distinguish between the mass media as instruments of information and entertainment, and as agents of manipulation and indoctrination?"[Marcuse 8]

The citizens of Fauston, like those everywhere else in America, are constantly bombarded with information that reinforces a consumer ethic and "displays the irresistible, unquestionable authority of the immense power behind the advertising". This philosophy and its agents, which includes all those engaged in its activities, practically everyone in the country, dominates the air waves as well as the printed media. The sum total of influence coming through the media constitutes an excessive restraint on preference formation, especially since one message dominates all others. The products look great, the malls look

* Quoted from Professor Gad Horowitz, University of Toronto 1997.
great, the whole way of life looks great, because it is advertised to look great. Very little contrary or negative information is provided to balance this presentation.

The media also do not provide an adequate venue for public deliberation. Yet as the small units of society are incorporated into mass society the media, especially televised media, take over as the major venue for the deliberation of issues. They are not media through which many voices meet to share information, challenge each other’s beliefs and opinions, expose new issues or find new ways of understanding and framing old issues. As already mentioned, the media in mass society provide a venue for a few opinions to be delivered to many passive receivers [Mill 302]. The debates and discussions presented by the media are limited to those for which wide acceptance is expected, limiting the depth, detail and the controversy that can be presented. They also must sell themselves to their sponsors, the large corporate businesses - the media serve the opinions of those with the ability to pay for their services.

In small towns like Fauston, the central square once provided a regular meeting place for local residents. There is a tradition of both formal and informal meetings around the town square and in the town halls of America. The shops and local restaurants around the square also provided opportunity for informal meetings and discussions. All of these venues facilitated the sharing and questioning of opinions. These exchanges nurtured a sense of involvement, affiliation and responsibility to the local community. These informal meetings did not directly provide for effective deliberation, that is, the means for enacting public policy, but the feelings of belonging and responsibility to the community they engendered may have been integral to the citizen’s sense of citizenship and democratic duty. In most of my conversations with Fauston residents this sense was lacking. From a
heightened sense of citizenship might follow a greater interest in town meetings and other local political activities. Involvement in these types of activities opens the possibilities for collective action and relieves the individual of the discouraging sense of acting alone against an “intractable status quo” [Sunstein 15].

Another aspect of deliberation that is not often recognized as such is the process of reflection. The absence of private autonomy “vitiates even the most conspicuous institutions of economic and political freedom - by denying freedom at its roots” [Marcuse 245]. Without the privacy or the time to think about one’s choices or to consider contrary beliefs and preferences that arise through public deliberation, the notion of autonomous decisions or preference and belief formation is disingenuous. Mass society has penetrated deeply and thoroughly into the individual’s private inner space. The constant ‘noise’ of mass commercial society invades the senses constantly, leaving too little room for unconflicted private reflection and too little time between stimulus and response. Accord to Marcuse: “It [society] can become democratic only through the abolition of mass democracy...”[Marcuse 244].

Summary

The traditional community barely survives within the environment of the mass society, within a system of organization that moves progressively towards the incorporation of all social entities into its mass structure. The community, for its own economic survival is compelled to amalgamate into the system, to ally itself with the agents of its own demise. As it loses its distinction and becomes absorbed into the mass, its functions as a breeding ground for culture, for political ideas, for citizen action, and as an autonomous political entity in its own right, are sacrificed.
The "economic-technical coordination" of society, "which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests" [Marcuse 3], determines the available choices and subjugates individual and community interests to the cause of productivity. Through their power over the technical organization of the productive apparatus, large corporations are able to manipulate the range of choices available to the community and its citizens [Marcuse 3]. Furthermore under this arrangement, choice itself becomes a commodity, traded back to the corporation, or more generally the system, in exchange for work. The organization of need and its satisfaction within the market insures a steady dependency of both community and individuals on the system in its capacity as the provider of work.

The citizens of Fauston must coordinate their preferences to suit the expectations of others who, often from great distances, control the opportunities for employment. Other community issues are obscured by the dominance of earning a living in modern industrial society. Since work, consumption, and other economic activities play such a dominant role in people's lives, there is little opportunity for preferences associated with other interests and activities to arise in the individual's own limited reflections, or in limited public deliberations. Reflecting on the plight of the British laborer, Thomas Jefferson asked:

"Does not the moral coercion of want subject their will as despotically to that of their employer, as the physical constraint does the soldier, the seaman or the slave?" [Padover (ed) 86].

This question is just as relevant for America's labor today as it was for British labor in Jefferson's time.

The republican ideal of a shared public life is historically and conceptually bound with the small community. In Knowledge For What?, Robert Lynd writes:

"Our system of government derives from the familiar intimacy of the New England town meeting where people knew each other and all the preferences and objections rose easily to public consideration." [Lynd, 1939:78]
Today, the individual is no longer as involved or as influenced by a local community but responds to the influences of the larger mass beyond the locality. As community cohesion loosens, the quality of the deliberative process at the local level declines and local opinions are diluted into the mass of public opinion [Mill 302-4]. The political voice of the individual is weakened when the opportunity to act collectively in the interests of the local community is bypassed. Moreover, it is more difficult for the individual to develop a citizen's sense of democratic responsibility within the context of a distant and diffuse mass society.

There is little in the way of the small Jeffersonian republics to question and challenge the authority and policy of central government, even less to question the quasi governmental policies of the market or its determination of rights based on the ability to pay. The citizens of Fauston are immersed in a culture that stresses material development. The productive - destructive system has encroached into every aspect of their lives. The most personal aspects of living are commodified and administered by the system. The local residents are so dominated by the need to earn money, that this activity constrains their ability to recognize and formulate alternative choices. Their choices cannot be understood separately from this factor of domination. "Constraints can operate on one's ability to conceive and formulate wants or projects as well as upon the opportunity to fulfill those projects already formed" [Connolly 148].

There is no absolute only degrees of autonomy. Under the present conditions in America, autonomy for both the individual and the fundamental social-political unit - the community, seems in short supply. The influence of the one message of the ubiquitous mass media, the materialism that surrounds in mass society, coupled with the way the demands of survival are manipulated within this system, hinders formation of autonomous preferences and beliefs. The nostalgic images of an autonomous, deliberating, free choosing, grass roots
American public is without substance in the present context. It only takes a trip to a small community to see the problem. As Dole said, “you can see America from here”, and America’s democracy, like her communities, is under siege [Dole 1997].
CHAPTER IV: DOMINANCE OF THE MASS PRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

DOMINANCE OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS

Today democracy in America must compete with powerful economic interests whose dominance over the means for opinion and policy formation is well entrenched within the present culture. That dominance arises naturally from the prominence given to economic production in the society. Quoting R. H. Tawney, Lynd comments on the "Rise of industry 'to the position of exclusive prominence among human interests' until the modern world is 'like a hypochondriac...absorbed in the processes of his own digestion'" [Lynd 1929:87].

In the closing pages of Middletown in 1929 the Lynds asked:

"What are the implications for social change of the present tendency for Middletown to subsume more and more of its living under pecuniary considerations?" [Lynd 1929:501].

The implications have arrived in 1997, the ascendancy of market system over human values including that of democracy, is quite complete today.

The ascendancy of economic concerns tends to displace from the public agenda issues that fall outside of the narrow interests of the market. When other issues do make it on to the agenda they are discussed according to market rationality. or what Marcuse aptly refers to as the "machine rationality of the corporate state" [Marcuse 18]. The 'reasonableness' of an issue is measured against the markets given set of accepted 'truths' - generally the rules of economic competition within the system of expanding production and consumption. Where an issue cannot be represented within the context of this system of
thought, it is often regarded as unreasonable. This avoids drawing into question the truths against which it was measured.

Social policy is measured against these ‘truths’. Quality of life issues are reduced to ‘economic well being’. Environmental legislation for instance, is commonly limited by considerations of the short run financial costs to vested corporate interests or to the economy in general. The choices are rarely argued seriously as between a moral right and moral wrong, this is far too abstract. Exhibiting the fungible quality of morality in the context of the present system, the issue is quickly transformed into a dollars and cents problem. The sacrifice of community bonds, community heritage, individual privacy, or the pastoral beauty of a rural countryside, are all rationalized by increases in economic well-being.

The more this kind of rationality dominates thinking and more social and cultural institutions are also coordinated into this system of thought, the less possible it is that alternative modes of thought and action might seem reasonable. Reason is itself redefined accord to its operational meaning in the context of a system devoted to economic production as an end. Reasonable in this context, is what yields behavior, or effects, which correspond with that end: production. Therefore, democratic choice, limited only by reasonableness, is deceptive. The criteria for determining that reasonableness, necessarily prejudices that judgment in favor of the status quo. These criteria prevent choices which call into question more than a specific set of circumstances, or isolated issues - choices which test the underlying premises of the system itself.

In Fauston, the decisions that have been made reflect the criteria for reasonableness of the production - consumption system. The decisions were made accord to what would
serve the expansion of the mass economic infrastructure and the maintenance of the
dominant position of economic concerns on the political and social agenda. To have
decided against the trend, against the encroachment of corporate mega business, against the
decentralizing and fragmenting influences of the mass market system and the spurious
progress that it represents, would have been truly unreasonable in the context of that system
and its particular mode of reason. It would have been suicidal. Yet the sacrifice of the town
center, the businesses and community interactions that converged there, and the subsequent
costly efforts to salvage bits of the old town, the well meaning but futile attempt to rekindle
community life in the old town by pouring money into the construction of an amphitheater,
all fall within the systems mode of reasonableness. All of these efforts fall within the
categories of progress and economic expansion.

As the town and community are incorporated into the mass market, the community
is disrupted and permanently altered, if not destroyed. The town structures and the history
they represented collapse from neglect and much of the local culture is also lost in the
process. The system then commodifies these lost qualities into ‘things’ and sells them back
to the people, who within the reason of the system are consumers first, and their humanity a
concern only to the degree to which it influences particular consumption habits. In this
activity, in its callous insensitivity to human qualities other than that of ‘consumer’, in its
destructive capacity, the unreasonableness of the system itself begins to show. But it is not
without its defenses against this kind of exposure.

One Dimensional Thought - Phalanx Against Reality

In the article, “If the GDP is Up Why is America Down?”, the authors show how
GDP and other related terms and measures of the economy, such as rates of growth,
expansion, recovery hide the destructive aspects of economic activity [Cobb et al. 1995].
They refer to these terms as "abstractions that serve as a conceptual phalanx against reality" [Cobb et al 1995: 72]. GDP is the established measure of economic progress. Since in the productive-consumption culture economic progress is commonly equated with well being, a rising GDP is ostensibly an indicator of social progress. The authors write:

"It treats everything that happens in the market as a gain for humanity, while ignoring everything that happens outside the realm of monetized exchange. regardless of the importance to well-being" [Cobb et al 65].

For instance, expenditures on crime prevention, coronary bypass surgery and legal costs, all associated with a decline in well-being, also boost the GDP. So do the costs of cleaning up toxic waste and the treatment of illnesses caused by pollution. When communities break apart under the stresses of the mass market, the construction of new subdivision communities, malls and fast food restaurants all add to GDP. So do the added costs in transportation as the residents must travel further beyond their locale to satisfy basic needs or to take advantage of the new consumer articles being offered at a new mall. As life becomes more demanding under the present system, to help them cope, people turn to the medical and pharmaceutical professions for sedatives, vitamins, energy boosters, and mood altering drugs all which adds to a rising GDP. Prozac alone. adds more than 1.2 billion to the GDP [Cobb et al 67]. What gets left out are the non monetized values of volunteer work, home child care, household and other types of work which add significantly to well-being.

The measuring stick of the production-consumption society is money value. The values of belonging, beauty, privacy, reflection, are not accounted for, neither as gains nor when they are lost. They can only enter into the accounts when they are commodified and
sold. Such is the case with ‘community’. The mass market moves into an area destroys the existing community, and then builds and sells its own ‘model communities’. The value of community is apparently recognized by the corporate marketers but they have no interest in saving the existing community. Their interest is selling you a new mocked up version of community. A community which they must create a demand for by disrupting existing communities and other social structures.

The negative costs of economic growth are either treated as positive input or hidden beneath the veil of a rising GDP. The activities of what Marcuse refers to as the “productive-destructive” system are interpreted and treated positively by GDP and its associated indicators. The methods and instruments for measuring those activities insure that only the productive or positive side is recognized.

The phalanx against reality is evident on many fronts, it is evident in the mode of thought, language and behavior that characterize the production-consumption ordering of mass society. Thought has become “one dimensional” as people have absorbed into their consciousness the ideology of the “productive apparatus” [Marcuse]. There is mass indoctrination of the population into consumer society, into a way of living and thinking that absorbs “the entire individual” [Marcuse10,11,12]. The “inner dimension of the mind in which opposition to the status quo can take root is whittled down” [Marcuse10]. This leaves no space or capacity for the formulation of opposition to the mode of reasoning that Marcuse calls “technological rationality” [Marcuse 11].

From the discussion of GDP, it becomes apparent that within the confines of the technological rationality of the market society, only what can be measured is of consequence. This exhibits the inherent positivism that characterizes thinking in this society:
what is known is limited to ‘observable facts’, or what is ‘verified’ by experiment. The qualities of objects are related to the experiments or operations which define them. The quality or truth value of this kind of thinking is validated in the economic and technological progress of the society, that progress being defined by the measuring functions which limit evidence that interferes with this validation process. It is a self validating system of thought, it never leaves its own conceptual framework in deciding its validity. This established mode of thinking, and its expression in the economic and technological progress of the production-consumption society are interlocked in a self perpetuating, mutually validating system.

Reductive Hypothesis

Also exhibited by this system of thought is reliance on what Dietrich Dörner refers to in The Logic of Failure, as the “reductive hypothesis” [Dörner 1997: 88-92]. Issues are simplified by relying on a single hypothesis that seems central to all others. A seemingly random or conflicting set of events is given coherence and order which reduces anxiety and is cognitively satisfying. Many complex interdependencies and reciprocating causes are missed in this process. Any information that does not conform to the hypothesis is ignored [Dörner 92]. The operation of the reductive hypothesis can be seen at work in the way choices in Fauston and other communities are framed. Decisions to organize the community in a manner that will attract more factories, are driven by the hypothesis that jobs bring security. Security and more generally, well being, are reduced and equated with jobs. Questions about short time frames, the narrow focus of financial security, quality of jobs, long term and general well being, or any other information that does not conform to the hypothesis is ignored.
Security is not what is offered in any case, it is rather the possible abeyance of financial insecurity which in a commercialized culture represents the abyss. The system creates and promotes insecurity as a means of domination and then provides tenuous respite from financial insecurity in trade for productivity and good behavior. In a narrowly focused, money dominated society, ‘financial security’ has become synonymous with the much more complex and comprehensive idea of total security. Non conforming issues and contrary possibilities are left out of the equation. They complicate the matter and might draw the whole notion of ‘security’ into consideration, raising questions about the total system that fails to provide that security. In a society which produces in excess of its needs, basic material security is possible for all of the citizens. Once this level of production is achieved the continuation of material insecurity within the society is created insecurity [Marcuse 4,5]. There may be many arguments in support of this created insecurity but they are narrowly focused and coming from within the system of thought that is itself a product of the commercialized culture of a system whose design encourages insecurity.

The element of coercion within this arrangement, may explain some of the sense of the inevitability that many of the residents expressed about the negative developments in Fauston. Indeed, “what can you do” when options are reduced and framed in such narrow terms as economic ruin vs. security? But the thinking of the Fauston resident moves very quickly from a despondent reaction to this sublimely delivered threat, to the positive acceptance of their fate in the name of ‘Progress’.

Progress

The concept ‘progress’ is like a magic panacea which absorbs and converts the negative aspects of economic development into the positive. Characteristic of thinking
within the "one dimensional" society [Marcuse], progress is synonymous with economic growth. As 'progress', economic growth is associated with improvement, betterment, and is inherently positive.

'Progress' hides the negative behind a belief in the American destiny, the inexorable thrust of America's history toward a positive future and world leadership. This has its historical roots in the mythological characterization of the 'pioneer spirit' of the early settlers. It is particularly represented by those later pioneers who moved on westward 'forging a nation out of the wilds of uncharted territory'. Teddy Roosevelt is one of the more exemplary heroes of this mythology. The positive spirit of the early pioneers, the march of progress in step with the settling of the nation, the expansionist dogma of early national heroes, are constantly echoed by the politicians and advertisers.

Within the context of the present "one dimensional" [Marcuse] "pecuniary society" [Lynd 225] dominated by commercial interests, 'progress' is synonymous with expansion of the "productive apparatus" [Marcuse xv]. "The rational accomplishments conceal the irrationality of the whole" [Marcuse 190]. Progress is thought of in terms of production, material success, machinery and technology. Hence the destruction that comes with commercial expansion, whether it be environmental, social, or personal, is overwhelmed by the mythological spirit and power of 'Progress'.

Where the progress of the productive-destructive system openly threatens other cherished myths, for instance, 'grass roots' democracy, an added touch of what Dörner calls "vertical flight" may be necessary to avoid contradiction and protect the positive power of progress [Dörner 104]. Dörner describes this tactic as: "Kicking ourselves free of recalcitrant reality altogether and constructing a more cooperative image of that reality"
[Dörner 104]. Perhaps this applies to those in the social sciences who contend that the community, against the massing forces of modern technology and corporate expansion, has progressed beyond place, transformed into a new form, perhaps expanded - progressed to encompass the entire society? Do these reconciled conceptions of the community serve as psychological defenses, producing more cooperative, less contrary images of the real conditions of the community? To what degree are the opinions of those who expressed positive opinions about the changes in Fauston, and the quality of its community, shaped by reconstructed images of reality and the mythos of progress?

**Concepts**

The narrowing of the concept of progress to coincide with economic expansion and the conceptual reconstruction of reality involved in vertical flight, corresponds with Marcuse's discussion of the features of "operationalism" within the present system of "one dimensional thought" [Marcuse 123]. Within this system of thought, concepts become synonymous with a corresponding set of operations [Marcuse 12, 13, 86-88]. This limits their meaning to that particular set of operations, avoiding "the excess of meaning over and above the operational concept", where the negative aspects might be encountered [Marcuse 157]. Many of the more abstract qualities of concepts, which are difficult to represent in specific operations or behavior, lack credibility in the system of one dimensional thought. [Marcuse 12, 13, 85-87].

Meaning-rich concepts are collapsed into words whose meaning is limited to the common usage [Marcuse 87]. According to Marcuse, this practice "precludes genuine development of meaning" - meaning beyond the word's function as defined by the established usage [Marcuse 87]. For instance, the word 'community' as it is commonly
used, becomes a cliché. As such it evokes images and associations which immediately
preclude controversy that might arise from consideration of the conceptual qualities of
community, freed of pragmatic adherence to established use. The concept’s vague,
unresolved character, its potential to draw into question its own established operational
representations or the established use of the word that encloses it, is all hidden behind, or
severed out, by the dominating standard use and meaning of the word. The language is
cleaned of its inefficiencies and limitation is positively represented as specificity. Getting to
the point becomes an exercise in avoidance, a purposeful ignorance for the sake of clarity,
but this is the clarity of an empty glass. For what is expressed under these rules is that which
is already expressed, the mass produced public opinions, clichés, and common
understandings for mass consumption. Language so confined does not offer the tools for
expanding meaning outside of the frame of the system of thought that rules it. When
concepts are limited to words - words whose meanings reflect a particular ideology -
experience is also narrowly defined, hence limited, by those meanings.

Operationalism hides the historical content of many important concepts. Jefferson
envisioned the small publics, as well as the individual, as political entities. They were bodies
of practical resistance to the centralizing tendencies of a national social and political
authority. Today categories like individual and public, no longer represent effective practical
social forces, nor as concepts do they function as “spheres of tension and contradiction”
[Marcuse xiv]. They are weakened in both capacities, having lost the contradictory historical
content they held in Jefferson’s time. These categories have become integrated with the
established conditions of modern industrial society.
“With the growing integration of industrial society these categories are losing their critical connotation, and tend to become descriptive, deceptive, or operational terms” [Marcuse xiv].

The concepts that might be used to formulate a resistant opinion are stripped of their oppositional content and rendered either neutral, or supportive of the status quo. They are “invalidated by up-to-date operational redefinitions” [Marcuse 98]. ‘Public’ and ‘community’ for instance, have been incorporated into the system in a supportive capacity. Through their use as comforting, illusion and nostalgia provoking terms, they evoke the feel good myths of a grass roots deliberative democracy. The illusion of community is raised from time to time in order to hide the degree to which America has become one homogenized mass of producer-consumers. ‘Individualism’, another previously oppositional category, is now neutralized, and serves the system in its new capacity displacing notions of collective action against the established order. In the mass society individualism is a fantasy, conformity is the norm. When an individualistic culture is blamed as the source of incivility in American society, usually what is being responded to are acts of irresponsibility masquerading as individualism.

Confined to established use and established meanings, concepts function as parameters to enclose thought within the ideology of the system. They are also often used actively as effective instruments of aggression against threats to the status quo. For example, a group of citizens may want to prevent a proposed development because of its negative impact upon community or the environment. Often what happens is that the conflict is

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* In “The Future of Democracy” Robert Kaplan quotes Dennis Judd an urban affairs expert from the University of Missouri: “It’s nonsense to think of that Americans are individualists. Deep down we are a nation of herd animals: micelike conformists...” [Kaplan 1997:72]
quickly 'brought down to earth' and framed in 'practical' terms as between the irresponsible and alarmist demands of community or environmental 'activists' on the one hand and the level headed reason of 'necessity' on the other. Categorized as 'activists', they are separated out from the majority. The activists and their cause are entombed by a label, one which in the context of the current system of thought, carries the stigma of mob mentality. They are the otherwise sane individuals who become dangerous and unreasonable in the mob.

In a one dimensional society, the majority is by default associated with reasonableness and necessity. Necessity, has the 'not otherwise thinkable' character of certainty. As such, it represents the end of controversy, possibility stops dead at the closed door of necessity. The system of thought in the one dimensional society is organized along its own ideologically determined horizon of necessity. Possibility remains outside in the dangerous world of fantasy. The horizon of necessity serves as a boundary delineating the realm of existence, as the limit against which existence confidently rests. Outside this boundary is the abyss. The challenge of the abyss causes a reactive clinging to the horizon of necessity: it is the anchor upon which the society hangs its existence. This existence, tenuously clinging to its created horizon, has a powerful incentive against broadening its horizon: existential fear.

Various products and behaviors of the mass productive-destructive society can be understood as overt expressions of aggression against anything which might arouse this fear. These expressions are directed against activities and the material symbols which harbor the potential to arouse disturbing or contradictory evidence - information that might expose the irrational elements of the established system of thought. Under the dominance of the productive-destructive system the containment of thought is actively maintained.
Active Defenses Against Reality

Within the productive-destructive system, the suppression of thought is evident in the way dangerous historical content is commonly and aggressively confronted at the front end of a bulldozer. Countless landmarks and traditional communal spaces have been dozed under and built over with new ‘efficient’ structures. Destruction and loss are covered with bricks, roads, parking lots and other developments. It is difficult to notice what is missing when it is buried under new development.

In Fauston, the dilapidated town square still represents a challenge to the system. It has the potential to remind the townspeople of something lost but not for long. Recently, on one corner of the square where an old building had finally collapsed, public funds were used to build an amphitheater. Memory of the activity that corner once supported is now buried under the new construction. Due to this well intended effort perhaps there will, on occasion, be activity on the corner again. Soon, people will forget and the amphitheater will come to symbolize the positive, the creative powers of the production-consumption system.

The ‘revitalization’ offensive in Fauston is in progress. Soon many other buildings will be knocked down. Some of the building fronts will be saved in the name of ‘restoration’. They will become something new, something ‘cute’ or ‘quaint’, largely devoid of their rich and ambiguous content. Their new cuteness will occupy the attention of the onlooker; historical content is turned into sentimental nostalgia in the mind of the viewer. As nostalgia, history becomes weakening disinformation.

Usually such ‘restored’ areas are unable to rekindle the levels of rich community interaction that they had once supported. They often become little more than attractive
locations for antique and other tourist types of businesses. A few struggling antique shops are already moving into the downtown of Fauston. The old objects within them are commodified as nostalgic remnants of the past. As commodities, they are stripped of their potential to “give rise to dangerous insights” [Marcuse 98]. As antiques, objects may function as safe repositories for potentially threatening insights. Instrumentally, the remnants - transformed into commodities - channel “subversive contents of the memory” into the positive expressions of consumerism [Marcuse 98]. The subversiveness is itself subverted: its negative content is transformed into the positive.

In Fauston, the most compelling example of aggressive action against threatening reality was the destruction of the old court house. The original court house at the center of the square surrounded by trees, park benches and an almost constant gathering of people, had been a living mecca for the meeting of the old with the present and one citizen within another. Was this too threatening to the established society? Did it represent too closely, an older style of deliberating public, a reminder of the historical foundations of American democracy, and therefore threaten the illusions created by the current operational redefinitions of democracy and community? Was it a threat to those “falsifications” which enable the society use words while avoiding meaning, to transform cherished ideals to conform with current conditions. to avoid the reality of the present which is opposed to

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* In some towns this becomes the foundation of their revitalization program. Walnut, Iowa is a good example of this approach to revitalization. Similar to Fauston, Walnut’s town structures were abandoned and in disrepair. The “Walnut Improvement Company” successfully encouraged antique businesses to locate there and eventually turned the old town into “Iowa’s Antique City”. What was once a town is now a cute tourist attraction.[Tourism Development Case 1; CFED 1993:45]

* Repositories as used here means: “A burial vault; a tomb.”[American Heritage Dictionary 3rd Ed.1992]
those ideals [Marcuse 98]? Did it strike at the current ideological boundaries of established thought and therefore represent an existential threat?

The act of tearing down the old historical court house appears symbolically as an action taken against exposure of the irrational elements of the productive-destructive system. The act itself exposes the destructive side of the system. But this 'negative' is quickly transformed into the 'positive' - a new court house was built, and one large enough to cover the all the ground where the trees and park benches once stood. Perhaps to assuage the guilt of those who were particularly instrumental in this destructive act, and as well to conceptually seal off any lingering controversy, the square was then renamed as "Liberty Square".

Rationalized as 'progress', these activities are confirmed as such in both their actions and their products. Destruction is replaced by the construction of symbols of progress. This provides the empirical evidence that the system is working. The physical structures of society are rebuilt in accordance with their functions in the productive superstructure. The better a structure serves its functional role within the system, the more 'progressive' it appears. The productive-destructive system continually ingests the historical, the beautiful, the natural, and transforms them into its own products. Through this process the opposing and contrary content of these and other qualities of the world are actively suppressed and attention is focused upon the self validating creations of the productive system. As expressions of the system of one dimensional thought, they represent (within that system of thought) rational behavior. The phalanx against reality operates as an enclosed system, self justifying and self affirming, in thought, language and actions.
CONCLUSION

When Robert and Helen Lynd did their study of "Middletown" in the 1920s, or when Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman wrote about "Springdale" in 1960, the towns and communities studied were geographically well defined. Today it is hard to find towns or communities in America that exhibit this characteristic. In the article "Was Democracy Just A Moment" Robert Kaplan states:

"In my travels I have looked for St. Louis and Atlanta and not found them. I found only hotels and corporate offices with generic architecture, 'nostalgic' tourist bubbles, zoned suburbs, and bleak urban wastelands; there was nothing distinctive that I could label 'St. Louis' or 'Atlanta.'" [Kaplan 72]

Kaplan’s description could apply to almost any city or town in America today, including the town of Fauston. The destruction of distinctiveness and its replacement with conformity, is the legacy of a society organized for a mass market economy. The towns of America have been structurally redesigned according to their economic and technical functions in the mass system of production and consumption. Patterns of social interaction are also coordinated with the organizational dictates of the system. Town design no longer reflects a focal point of social communal interactions, nor do the new designs facilitate interaction. The unfocused suburbs and malls that pass for towns today were not designed to promote community, culture or well-being. They are designed to promote business and the efficient administration of the mass market. The casualties of these developments, the traditional communities of America, have had little say in the matter.

The community rhetoric of politicians and market advertisers, is spoken for its nostalgic appeal. It also helps to keep up the myths about the traditional community in
America and therefore plays a role in obscuring the real state of affairs. It has also been suggested that loosening the concept of community from geography not only distracts attention from the loss of the traditional community, but in doing so, serves the trend toward mass society. The politics of community and how it is discussed in both the public and political discourse will depend largely upon the definition that prevails. As Jefferson's 'ward' or 'small republic', the territorial community is the source of 'grass roots' democracy. The dissolving of America's small communities into mass society, is contrary to America's democratic foundations.

Explicit vs. Implicit Goals

The main problems and issues discussed in this thesis - the demise of community, the growth of mass market society, the decline of democracy and democratic institutions, the closing of thought that is both instrumental in the generation of these problems, and prevents recognition and protest against these conditions - can be understood as consequences of a general confusion of the explicit goals of the economic system for the implicit goals of society. Production and profit, the general explicit goals of the economic system have gained ascendancy over the implicit goals of society, generally: well-being.

Well-being has become synonymous with productivity and general economic expansion. Other human issues are either transformed into economic issues, actively and openly pushed aside, subtly suppressed, or otherwise defended against through the malaise of one dimensional psychology. The forces of the national-global mass production-consumption system in hand with modern technology, coordinate the living of people accord to its own organizational, economic and administrative rationale. The dominating

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* This formulation is borrowed from The Logic of Failure [Dörner]
concern of earning a living is both an effect of the system's rationality and a major source of its perpetration and ability to organize living on a mass scale. People become sick under the dominance of this system. The physicians and psychologists provide treatments for the symptoms: to help people cope with the demands and the stresses that come from a life in service to the productive-destructive apparatus. Politics has become largely an economic affair. Deliberation is costly. Media define and reduce issues to fit within the confines of expensive monetized time. Elections are run with economic themes in front, attesting to both the pollsters understanding of the priorities of the public and the public's understanding of what 'counts' within the present organization of society.

If the implicit goal of society is human well-being, then the productive apparatus is only one means to that end. In this limited capacity, it does not determine the factors of well-being or exclude other means of achieving them. These decisions are the prerogatives of the humans who may use the production system, its technology, its rationality, in their pursuit of well being. It should be vigilantly understood that “the requirements of profitable mass production are not necessarily identical with those of mankind” [Marcuse 245]. The productive system, in its destructive capacity, threatens specific aspects of well-being; from a position of dominance over all other concerns, it threatens well-being in general. The present society in America is so dominated by the production-consumption system, that the question needs to be asked: “For what purpose is society? Is it societies purpose to organize humans for production, to serve the ends of the economic system?”

**A Tribute to a Pessimistic View**

Adherence to the system and its rationality has become essential. The rationality of the system is joined with that of survival. As the provider or as the means of gaining
sustenance, the system of organized production and consumption dominates living. If someone opposes this manner of living he or she may be threatened with the loss of sustenance. Even in cases where this is not physically life threatening, being out of the economic loop in the illusory world of advertised affluence represents a kind of social death.

The system has become the major arbiter of the demands placed upon us. It has an insatiable appetite for our energies, which nurture its growth; through it we derive our rewards, while this as a process threatens to drain the life out of us. The productive apparatus is also destructive. While it is the bearer of our sustenance, the super apparatus that controls and manages nature by turning it into ‘product’. due to its terrible efficiency, it is also a monster which threatens to destroy nature and humanity as a consequence. Yet, it is the monster we must patronize, for if we do not nurture it, if it does not grow, it collapses and the order that we have become dependent upon for survival goes with it. Our survival has been co-opted into the systems survival, they hang together. Outside of our rational obligations to the maintenance of this irrational order, and all the ways in which this order determines our thoughts, our language our activities. we are ‘free’.

Oh well, what can you do?
APPENDIX

Methods Employed:

I spent two months living in Fauston, observing and informally questioning and interviewing residents. This was supplemented by questionnaires which were distributed to residents of Fauston. Fifty questionnaires were distributed and 34 were returned completed. A sample of the questionnaire is provided as Appendix II.

The interview questions were derived from the survey questions but more effort was made in the interviews to explore personal memories of former town life in Fauston and compare those memories with current experiences. There was also more effort made in the interviews to get the respondent to reveal beliefs and priorities that affect ‘quality of life’ concerns and expose contradictory beliefs and preferences. The interviews were most successful at exposing contradictions in beliefs. In most cases the belief that societies preoccupation with business and money was responsible for the erosion of community and family values was contradicted by the belief in promoting business and economic development, primarily for its monetary rewards. The “almighty dollar” was both the culprit and the savior. The prevalence of contradictory beliefs and assumptions has been noted in many other more extensive studies [Lane 1962; Lynd 1929; Lynd 1939].

Note on Validity

The methods employed in the field research for this thesis were based loosely upon the qualitative style employed by the Lynds in their early study of “Middletown” and other similar community studies. The present research was not as extensive or comprehensive as the Lynd’s or as usual in the tradition of community studies. Such extensive research was neither warranted by the scope nor the purpose of this thesis. No claim is made concerning
the validity of the information obtained through these methods nor does this affect the quality of the arguments put forth in the thesis which has been primarily an exploration of theory. Sampling was not random. the methods were employed in the context of discovery not justification. The information was collected, as the Lynds state in the introduction to *Middletown*: “because it affords indispensable insights into the moods and habits of thought of the city” [Lynd 1929]. More than anything my relationship with the residents in Fauston and my observations of their activities provided substance for applying and exploring the theoretical concerns that arise in this thesis.
SURVEY QUESTIONS       Age:__ Male/Female?

First, I would like to thank you for taking this moment to answer these questions. The following are
questions about Your town and how You think and feel about Your town. Please answer them as briefly or in
as much detail as you feel inclined.

1. a) Briefly describe how Fauston looked 25 or more years ago. (If before your time, describe and give the
approximate dates of your earliest impressions)

1. b) Describe how Fauston looks today.

2. a) Briefly describe Fauston as a community 25 or more years ago. (If this is before your time, describe
and give approximate dates of your earliest recollections of the community).

2. b) Describe the condition of the community in Fauston today.

3. a) Are you happy with Fauston today as a town?

   b) As a community?

4. a) What changes in Fauston as a town or as a community are you most unhappy or happy with?

4. b) What changes (if any) would you like to see?

5. a) Do you feel that You have had any say in how Fauston has changed over the years?

5. b) Is there anything you could do now to change Fauston more to your liking?

6. The following question requires a carefully considered answer: What constitutes a "good life"?

   (use back or extra paper for longer answers to any of the questions)
WORKS CITED


