Community in the City. Above: West Hastings Street, June 2012 (Elvin Wyly). Below: Vancouver, CIBC Run for A Cure. Concord Pacific, "Building Communities Together." October 2010 (Elvin Wyly).

Community
Urban Studies 200, *Cities*
September 26, 2012
Elvin Wyly

An Elusive but "Warmly Persuasive" Word

"Community" is one of the most widely-used words in the English language. The word is used so often, in so many different contexts, that its meanings have become quite flexible and contingent: half a century ago, one sociologist identified no fewer than ninety-four different definitions of the word as it was used among scholars of the day.[1] The true meaning of the term can thus be elusive. But there is no question that the word can be powerful. The literary theorist Raymond Williams famously called "community" a "warmly persuasive" word.[2] Who could possibly object to ... community?

What is "community"? What does it mean for urbanism? Is there a distinctive urban form of community, or an urban way of life? These are some of the most enduring questions in urban studies. When urbanists have provided clear answers to these questions, their responses have often been inseparable from value judgments -- assertions of what is good or bad about a particular place, or about a process that is affecting a certain kind of community. As we approach questions of community, therefore, we need to be comfortable with the notion that we may not find definitive answers that will be convincing to everyone. But we will still be able to learn a great deal about very important things -- about that feeling of "we-ness," the "sense of shared identity and interdependence," the factors that make people feel like insiders or outsiders, the question, "can any events bring us -- a diverse bunch with varied concerns and interests -- together in community?"[3]

Community refers to a group of people sharing

1. a physical space or location,
2. a trait, preference, or activity, or
3. a strong identity, culture, and history.

In the simplest terms, community refers to one of three kinds of relationships:

1. A group of people sharing a physical space.

2. A group of people who share an easily-identified trait, preference, or activity.

3. A group of people who share a strong and durable identity and culture, marked by a high degree of social interaction and social cohesion.
Community may involve people living near

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[1] G. A. Hillery (1955). "Definitions of Community." *Rural Sociology* 20(2), 111-124. Raymond Williams identified eighty.
[2] Raymond Williams (1976). *Keywords*. London: Fontana.
[3] E. Barbara Phillips (2010). *City Lights: Urban-Suburban Life in the Global Society, Third Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, quotes from p. 168, 167.

one another (relationship 1). But it may also refer to people who share similar hobbies (relationship 2) or to people in a particular religious faith (relationship 3) -- *regardless of location*. Much of the confusion around the uses of the word 'community' can be resolved by thinking carefully about the differences between these three kinds of relationships. When inner-city community organizers talk about community, they are usually referring to specific, local neighborhoods, where people (hopefully) overcome their differences to get along in daily life. When advertisers mention community, they are often trying to reach people with particular interests, hobbies, and preferences (relationship 2), in the hopes of being able to sell them particular kinds of products or services. When political or religious leaders use the word community, they are usually referring to relationship 3. Sometimes, a leader is trying to convince members of a long-established community to support a particular cause; other times, a leader is trying to actively build that strong and durable identity among people who may not yet have it.
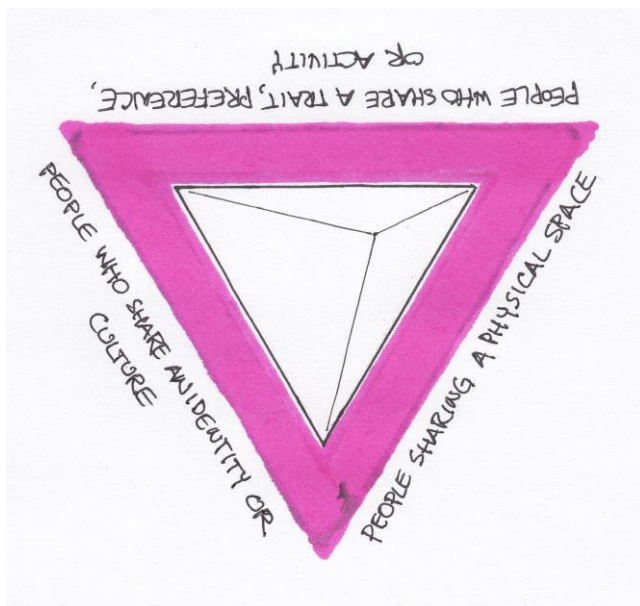
Community as a Pyramid?

It is sometimes helpful to envision community as a prism, or as a pyramid. Each face defines one of the separate facets of community. In practice, most meanings and uses of the word community tend to be on one of the three faces of the pyramid. And yet for many people, the very word "community" itself evokes feelings and memories of a time, place, and social/cultural setting where all three meanings intersect. Such an intersection is possible -- right at the peak of the pyramid -- but it is very rare indeed. Even false nostalgic memories, however, can have consequequences: the nation-state, perhaps the most important political category since the Westphalian Peace of 1648, is in many ways just an "imagined community."[4]

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[4] Benedict Anderson (1983). *Imagined Communities.* London: Verso.

What makes an *urban* community? This depends on the links between the first relationship above -- people sharing a physical space -- and the other two kinds of social relations. As a growing share of the human population lives in urban areas, many kinds of social relations have changed. The history of what is often called "classical urban theory," or "classical sociology," helps us to understand how these changes led to widespread anxiety and social concern beginning in the late nineteenth century.

Classical Urban Theory and the Rural-Urban Shift

For Ferdinand Tönnies, the strong family ties and traditional authority of preindustrial, rural **gemeinschaft** *(community) were being destroyed by the transient, superficial, and calculating actions of individuals "in the public sphere, in the outside world" of* **gesellschaft** *(society).*

Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) became a prominent sociologist in Germany, and published widely on sociological theory, field studies, and the ideas of Thomas Hobbes. He published over nine hundred works, but he is best known for *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft* (1887). *Gemeinschaft* is loosely translated as "community," which Tönnies equated with the social world of the preindustrial, agrarian, rural settlements with strong family ties, traditional authority, and binding collective sentiment. *Gesellschaft* (translated as "society," or sometimes as civil society) is marked by impersonal social relations, mediated by money, formal contracts, and the pursuit of rational, individual interests. For Tönnies, the development of commerce, industrialization, and capitalism eroded traditional rural and village life, and drove the expansion of *Gesellschaft* in ever-larger towns and cities. He provides a nice, concise summary of the argument:

> "All kinds of social co-existence that are familiar, comfortable, and exclusive are to be understood as belonging to *Gemeinschaft*. *Gesellschaft* means life in the public sphere, in the outside world. In *Gemeinschaft* we are united from the moment of our birth with our own folk for better or worse. We go out into *Gesellschaft* as if into a foreign land. A young man is warned about mixing with bad society: but 'bad community' makes no sense in our language."[5]

Tönnies viewed the rural-urban shift, then, in stark terms, as the old being destroyed by the new. "Community is old, society is new, both as an entity and as a term."[6] He also quotes another influential political theorist of the nineteenth century to make his point: "Wherever urban culture flourishes, 'Society' also appears as its indispensable medium. Country people know little of it."[7] Tönnies laments the loss of rural and village community in the face of industrial urbanism:

[5] Ferdinand Tonnies (1887). *Community and Civil Society*. Reprinted and translated by Jose Harris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 18.
[6] Tonnies, *Community and Civil Society*, p. 19.
[7] Bluntschli, quoted in Tonnies, *Community and Civil Society*, p. 19.

"everyone who praises rural life has pointed to the fact that people there have a stronger and livelier sense of Community. Community means genuine, enduring life together, whereas Society is a transient and superficial thing."[8]

*For Emile Durkheim, urbanization replaced **mechanical solidarity** based on proximity and a "collective conscience" of shared morality with **organic solidarity** based on the division of labor, functional interdependence, and impersonal contracts and penalties.*

The French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) was similarly suspicious of the effects of urbanization on community, but he was less categorical than Tönnies. Durkheim emphasized the role of the **division of labor** in changing the nature of social ties. In rural society, people are bound together in *mechanical solidarity*: physical proximity and a general uniformity of beliefs and values. The second chapter of *The Division of Labor in Society* is titled, "Mechanical Solidarity Through Likeness." Durkheim wrote,

"The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society forms a determinate system which has its own life; one may call it the *collective* or *common conscience*. ... it is, by definition, diffuse in every reach of society."[9]

Durkheim placed great emphasis on legal codes and societal mechanisms of controlling crime and deviance. In mechanical solidarity, the legal code served to repress any activity that offended the common, shared morality -- the "collective conscience." By contrast, "Organic solidarity due to the division of labor" emerges from the development of capitalism and the interdependency of very different people, doing very different things, in a modernizing industrial society.

"Society becomes more capable of collective movement, at the same time that each of its elements has more freedom of movement...each organ, in effect, has its special physiognomy, its autonomy.... we propose to call the solidarity which is due to the division of labor, organic."[10]

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[8] Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, p. 19. In part, Tönnies' negative view of cities reflects his commitment to a psychological basis for Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. He distinguishes between humans' *natural* ("organic, essential") will, "the psychological equivalent of the human body" (p. 95), and a *rational* or "arbitrary" will that involves calculation, "arbitrary freedom," and rational choice. Rational will "comes into being only through the agency of its author -- the person doing the thinking -- although its existence may be recognized and acknowledged as such by other people" (p. 96). *Gemeinschaft* grows out of social groups living and acting on the basis of natural, essential will; *Gesellschaft* emerges from individuals following rational, arbitrary will.
[9] Emile Durkheim (1933). *The Division of Labor in Society*. English translation published in 1933 (Fourth printing, 1960). New York: Macmillan, p. 79.
[10] Durkheim, p. 131.

Organic solidarity involves members of a heterogeneous society bound together by functional interdependence, and order is maintained by impersonal contracts, restitution, and similar mechanisms.[11]

Organic Solidarity in the Parking Lot. San Diego, December 2005 (Elvin Wyly). Durkheim viewed legal codes and sanctions as indicators of modernity. Rules proliferate with the expansion of urban-industrial society. The rules become more detailed and complicated in order to control behaviors in societies that have become too large and diverse to remain organized under the old "collective conscience" of mechanical solidarity.

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[11] Durkheim also paid close attention to rights over property, which were of course being redefined in dramatic ways by industrialization. "Things, to be sure, form part of society just as persons, and they play a specific role in it." "Real" rights over these things, these immediately tangible land or commodities, were to be distinguished from personal rights involved in promises such as credit and contracts. The older system of mechanical solidarity "directly links things to persons, but not persons among themselves" and such real rights "are thus limited, they do not cause conflict; hostility is precluded, but there is no active coming together, no consensus." An increasingly fine-grained division of labor changes all that, by creating the simultaneous possibility for large-scale social consensus alongside severe hostility among persons over personal rights; contract law based on restitution thus emerges to negotiate these conflicts. Durkheim, quotes from p. 116, p. 131.

We can find similar themes in the work of Georg Simmel (1858-1918), another German scholar concerned with the social psychology of life in the city. In his famous essay, "The Metropolis in Mental Life,"[12] originally published in 1905, Simmel sought to identify the distinctive features of the city that required urbanites to think and act in certain ways -- ways that many scholars of the day viewed as unusual and often problematic. For Simmel,

> "The psychological foundation, upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected, is the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli. Man is a creature whose existence is dependent on differences, i.e., his mind is stimulated by the difference between present impressions and those which have preceded. Lasting impressions, the slightness in their differences, the habituated regularity of their course and contrasts between them, consume, so to speak, less mental energy than the rapid telescoping of changing images, pronounced differences within what is grasped at a single glance, and the unexpectedness of violent stimuli. To the extent that the metropolis creates these psychological conditions -- with every crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life -- it creates in the sensory foundations of mental life and in the degree of awareness necessitated by our organization as creatures dependent on differences, a deep contrast with the slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm of the sensory-mental phase of small town and rural existence."[13]

"The modern mind has become more and more a calculating one."
-- Georg Simmel

This sharp contrast, Simmel believed, tapped into fundamental differences in the human psyche, between an emotional, unconscious sense bound up with feelings and emotional relationships -- associated with the 'smoothly flowing rhythm' of small town and rural life -- and the more rational, calculating character of conscious reason -- "the most adaptable of our inner forces"[14] that is capable of dealing with the chaos of metropolitan existence. For Simmel, then, there is a distinct "metropolitan type":

> "Thus the metropolitan type -- which naturally takes on a thousand individual modifications -- creates a protective organ for itself against the profound disruption with which the fluctuations and discontinuities of the external milieu threaten it. Instead of reacting emotionally, the metropolitan type reacts primarily in a rational manner, thus creating a mental predominance through the intensification of consciousness, which in turn is caused by it. Thus the reaction of the metropolitan person to those events is moved to a sphere of mental activity

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[12] Georg Simmel (2002[1905]). "The Metropolis and Mental Life." In Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson, eds., *The City Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 11-19. Originally published in 1905.
[13] Simmel (2002 [1905]), pp. 11-12.
[14] Simmel (2002 [1905]), p. 12.

which is least sensitive and which is furthest removed from the depths of the personality."[15]

At first, it seems that Simmel is condescending towards the old, *ir*-rational mindset of rural life. But he is not convinced of the virtues of 'metropolitan reason.' "The modern mind," and especially the urban, metropolitan mind, "has become more and more a calculating one."[16] It is associated with the money economy, "which has ... filled the daily life of so many people with weighing, calculating, enumerating, and the reduction of qualitative values to quantitative terms."[17] The metropolitan mind is obsessed with time and punctuality: "If all the watches in Berlin suddenly went wrong in different ways even only as much as an hour, its entire economic and commercial life would be delayed for some time."[18] In ways, the metropolitan mind becomes numb; "Put simply, in the city we respond with our head rather than our heart. We learn to adopt a matter-of-fact attitude about the world around us. We simply don't care; we don't want to "get involved"..."[19]

Even so, Simmel believed that metropolitan life made it possible, although not inevitable, for people to reach unprecedented heights of intellectual development. And so his essay concludes with a poignant commentary on the metropolis as that era's distinctive way of reconciling one of the fundamental tensions of Western philosophy -- the relationship between the 'general human quality' in every individual person, and the sense of individuality at the heart of classical liberalism.

> "It is the function of the metropolis to make a place for the conflict and for the attempts at unification of both of these in the sense that its own peculiar conditions have been revealed to us as the occasion and the stimulus for the development of both. Thereby they attain a quite unique place, fruitful with an inexhaustible richness of meaning in the development of the mental life. They reveal themselves as one of those great historical structures in which conflicting life-embracing currents find themselves in equal legitimacy. Because of this, however, regardless of whether we are sympathetic or antipathetic with their individual expressions, they transcend the sphere in which a judge-like attitude on our part is appropriate. To the extent that such forces have been integrated, with the fleeting existence of a single cell, into the root as well as the crown of the totality of historical life to which we belong -- it is our task not to complain or to condone but only to understand."[20]

In various ways, Tönnies, Durkheim, and Simmel have influenced the thinking of every later sociologist. We can see elements of their thought refined and synthesized in one of the major figures in sociology of the twentieth century. Louis Wirth (1897-1952) was one of the world's eminent sociologists, at the peak of his prestige and intellectual contributions when he died of a

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[15] Simmel (2002 [1905]), p. 12.
[16] Simmel (2002 [1905]), p. 13.
[17] Simmel (2002 [1905]), p. 13.
[18] Simmel (2002 [1905]), p. 13.
[19] John J. Macionis and Vincent N. Parrillo (2007). *Cities and Urban Life*, Fourth Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice-Hall, p. 133.
[20] Simmel (2002 [1905]), p. 19.

heart attack right after delivering a lecture in Buffalo, New York, at the age of 54. He wrote widely on urban themes, authoring books and articles with titles like "The Ghetto," "Ideological Aspects of Social Disorganization," "Human Ecology," and "Localism, Regionalism, and Centralization." He is best known, however, for a 1938 essay, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," in which he suggested that there is a distinctive and fundamentally, inescapably *urban* personality. Wirth provided an extensive commentary on what a fundamentally sociological definition of the city required, proposing a theory of urbanism premised on "size of the population aggregate," density, and heterogeneity. Each of these features has distinctive sociological aspects, but in combination they lead people to adapt and respond with distinct and (at the time) new patterns of behavior.

Confronted with innumerable personal claims and expectations from strangers, individuals respond by becoming rational, calculating, instrumental, and seemingly uncaring:

> "The reserve, the indifference, and the blasé outlook which urbanites manifest in their relationships may ... be regarded as devices for immunizing themselves against the personal claims and expectations of others."[21]

Moreover, people rarely appear to one another as the complex, multi-faceted individuals they are. The self is segmented, as people relate to one another in very specific and narrowly-defined roles. The urbanite knows few other urbanites as whole, complete persons, with families, interests, loves, desires, successes, and failures. In the big city, there are simply too many people, too many demands on our time, attention, and emotions. In order to survive, people *must* segment their identities, presenting only a few facets of themselves depending on the circumstances and the particular social situations and roles in which they encounter various people. Unfortunately, this constant segmentation takes a toll. Not knowing others as whole, complete persons can be deeply isolating. To *not be known* as a whole, complete person can be painfully alienating. The sense of self can be threatened:

For Louis Wirth, urbanism creates the "segmented self," as people relate to one another in specific, narrowly-defined roles for particular narrowly-defined purposes.

"Reduced to a stage of virtual impotence as an individual, the urbanite is bound to exert himself by joining with others of similar interest into groups organized to obtain his ends. This results in the enormous multiplication of voluntary organizations directed toward as great a variety of objectives as there are human needs and interests."[22]

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[21] Louis Wirth (1938). "Urbanism as a Way of Life." Reprinted in *On Cities and Social Life*, Edited by Albert J. Reiss, Jr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964, reprinted in 1981, p. 71.
[22] Wirth, "Urbanism," p. 81.

In an echo of Durkheim, then, Wirth sees the *city* acquiring a social life that individuals are losing. Wirth saw urbanization as such a powerful force that it forced all kinds of people to respond in similar, fundamentally urban ways.

> "The superficiality, the anonymity, and the transitory character of urban social relations make intelligible...the sophistication and the rationality generally ascribed to city-dwellers. Our acquaintances tend to stand in a relationship of utility to us in the sense that the role each one plays in our life is overwhelmingly regarded as a means for the achievement of our own ends. Whereas the individual gains, on the one hand, a certain degree of emancipation or freedom from the personal and emotional controls of intimate groups, he loses, on the other hand, the spontaneous self-expression, the morale, and the sense of participation that comes with living in an integrated society. This constitutes essentially the state of *anomie*, or the social void, to which Durkheim alludes in attempting to account for the various forms of social disorganization in technological society."[23]

*For Wirth, **the city** acquires the social life that individuals are losing.*

Problems with the Rural-Urban Typology

This classical heritage, despite its vast influence, suffers from many serious problems. Major hypotheses remain poorly-specified, and many have not been tested in any rigorous, systematic way. We can find abundant evidence of sharp rural-urban contrasts in community life if we adopt a research design that looks for them. But we can also find considerable evidence of commonality. And the scholarship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most now agree, did succumb to a profound and unjustified romanticism that celebrated the rural life that was disappearing in the face of industrialization and urbanization. In any event, all of these forces were lumped together: was the supposedly urban personality the product of industrialization, of capitalism and the expansion of commercial and monetary relations? Were the urban dimensions of these changes nothing more than incidental spatial outcomes? Classical views of the rural-urban shift must be revised considerably to provide any relevant understanding of contemporary urban community. Some scholars have simply given up, suggesting that "in an important sense the city is not a social entity; that we have been victims of a fallacy of misplaced concreteness in treating it as such," and that urban studies should stop looking for community in the city.[24]

New Perspectives on Urban Community

But not all scholars are frustrated with this ambiguity, and there is enormous interest in attempts to define urban community. The term remains slippery, and among the wide range of alternative

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[23] Wirth, "Urbanism," p. 72.
[24] P. Abrams (1978). "Towns and Economic Growth: Some Theories and Problems." In Abrams and Wrigley, editors, *Towns and Society: Essays in Economic History and Historical Sociology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

definitions, the single common element seems to be its use as a "warmly persuasive word."[25] But this seems to work: "this positive glow which has tended to surround the term 'community' may at least help to explain its popularity with contemporary policy-makers, despite the range of critics who have challenged its continued usefulness."[26] This interest runs across the political spectrum, although in many cases the focus on *urban* community has been lost.[27]

We can identify several broad features of the new interest in these classical-sociology questions.

First, there has been a revival of interest in -- and a more sophisticated analysis of -- some of the foundational ideas of the classical sociologists that had been neglected for many years. Andrew Sayer and Richard Walker, for example, document a dramatic transformation of a key element of Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, and Durkheim's theorization of organic solidarity -- the division of labor. The division of labor has become "an active force in social ordering, economic development, and the lived experience of the participants. Far from being a simple consequence of more profound social forces, the division of labor has far-reaching effects of its own which are often falsely attributed to other structures."[28]

Second, classical dichotomies have been reversed and applied to contemporary urban processes. Some experts now go to the heart of the big city to understand aspects of community tied to <u>rural</u> life, and vice versa. Consider this adaptation of Tönnies' ideas, in an analysis of recent Dutch policies in disadvantaged inner-city neighborhoods:

> "The terms community, disintegration, integration, and cohesion are widely used. Everybody applies these concepts and appears to understand their significance and consider them important. Many also believe that things used to be different. Media depictions of old city districts convey this sense of nostalgia. Dilapidated districts are believed to have been 'like villages' at one time. Such a village symbolizes the *Gemeinschaft*, where harmony, common bonds, and solidarity prevailed."[29]

Other researchers have gone the other way -- examining how long-established rural communities persist even with the arrival of metropolitan influences. In a study of a small town northwest of Melbourne, Australia, researchers interviewed a local government official who described the place like this:

> "It's an incredibly diverse community ... you've got groups or individuals there who come from quite different backgrounds and have got different aspirations. Some are very much what I term the carry-over from the 1970s hippie era. [Then there is] the more traditional ... groups where they're carrying on their family

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[25] Raymond Williams (1976). *Keywords.* London: Fontana.

[26] Marjorie Mayo (2000). *Cultures, Communities, Identities: Cultural Strategies for Participation and Empowerment.* New York: Palgrave, p. 37.

[27] In many other cases, "urban" appears only as a synonym for people marginalized by poverty, race, ethnicity, or other axes of difference typically seen as the "problems of the cities."

[28] Andrew Sayer and Richard Walker (1992). *The New Social Economy: Reworking the Division of Labor.* Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 1-2.

[29] Mayo, *Cultures*, p. 6.

business or life as there has been traditionally in a very conventional manner. ... Then of course you've also got another group: professionals coming out of the metropolis and living in this area because it's only an hour and fifteen minutes away."[30]

Third, experts are investigating how globalization and development are creating new experiences of urban community. Some of the most interesting examples come from contemporary urbanization in China. George C.S. Lin, a prominent specialist on urban China, notes that

> "Whereas earlier scholarly interests in 'urbanism as a way of life' were intertwined with those in modernization, recent studies of urbanism in different world regions have been invariably empowered by the concept of globalization and accompanied understandably by a curiosity about global convergence."[31]

But Chinese urbanism is not simply following a path of convergence with a "global metropolitanism" modeled on North American consumption and landscape patterns, as some have argued. Lin analyses how "Chinese cities had, until fairly recently, functioned less as centers of a market economy and more as political and social centers for the state to exercise its power over both urban and rural societies," and so "change in state-society relations," and not some global convergence, is the factor that will "alter the formation, growth, and diffusion of urbanism as a way of life shared by the urbanites."[32] The most important contemporary shift in state-society relations involved the transition from Mao's state-socialist leadership from 1949 to his death in September 1976, to the more market-oriented priorities of the Communist Party since the late 1970s. "In the socialist era, important features of (anti-) urbanism were linked with a special state-society relation that privileges the interests of the working class, discriminates [against] merchants, values equality, and stresses urban manageability."[33] But the post-socialist era has changed state-society relations in ways that deeply affect urbanism as a way of life in China -- facilitating "the growth of modern urbanism characterized by the dramatic expansion of urban size, high inner-city density, growing diversity, heterogeneity, and inequality."[34] For Lin, what this all means is that Chinese urbanism has been "hybrid" and path-dependent, and provides a compelling reason to question the idea that globalization will lead to a convergence of different experiences of urban community. Globalization is spreading certain aspects of cities and urban life around the world, and strengthening connections. But it is not leading to any single, common, 'global urbanism as a way of life.'

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[30] Ruth Panelli and Richard Welch (2005). "Why Community? Reading Difference and Singularity in Community." *Environment and Planning A*, 37, 1589-1611, quote from p. 1600.
[31] George C.S. Lin (2007). "Chinese Urbanism in Question: State, Society, and the Reproduction of Urban Spaces." *Urban Geography* 28(1), 7-29.
[32] Lin, "Chinese Urbanism," p. 9.
[33] Lin, "Chinese Urbanism," p. 1.
[34] Lin, "Chinese Urbanism," p. 1.

Pudong New Area, Shanghai, China, February 2010 (Elvin Wyly). Does globalization promise the convergence of a contemporary urbanism as a way of life? George C.S. Lin makes the case for a distinctive and hybrid Chinese urbanism. In "the Pudong New Area, a new Times Square of Greater Shanghai, and a redeveloped Xin Tian Di (literally 'New Heaven and Earth') have been created ... as the city acquires its symbol and identity to become the Dragon Head of urbanism and modernity." But "This newly created skyline of modernity has not completely replaced the old one. Instead, the spaces of new urbanism [have] been intensely intersected and mixed with those of the traditional and the poor: the urban under-class, the unemployed or underemployed, the informal sectors, and the peasant migrants. ... Contemporary Chinese cities are, therefore 'at once the progress and hope of the country and at the same time places of anxiety, despair, and misery.'" George C.S. Lin (2007). "Chinese Urbanism in Question: State, Society, and the Reproduction of Urban Spaces." *Urban Geography* 28(1), 7-29, quotes from p. 22, also citing Clifton Pannell, 1992.

Fourth, the effects of new technologies have reshaped debates on urban community. One new model of urban community in this age comes from the talented students working with E. Barbara Phillips, who coined the term *Techno$chaft* to describe a new form of spatial, social, and

political-economic organization that completely subverts Tönnies' continuum.[35] Information has evolved from communication to the medium of wealth production, and the globalization of information flows has unhinged an increasing array of social functions from the physical confines of the city. Phillips only hints at the implications of *Techno$chaft* for a distinctively urban self, and in the years since she first wrote this section (equivalent to a century in pre-Internet time) have seen no consensus. One observer has tried to use "some elements of the history of the Internet to approach sociological insights," offering a notion of the "distributed society" as a model for what the architecture of networks and communications are doing to social life.[36] This particular model leans heavily on structural-functional traditions of sociology, such that the expansion of the Internet is said to play a causal role in the creation of social roles and social functions in the formation and maintenance of communities.

New perspectives on urban community:

1. A revival of interest in classical ideas, such as the division of labor.
2. Creative reversals of some of the dichotomies.
3. Exploration of the effects of globalization on community, particularly in rapidly-changing places like post-reform China.
4. Consideration of the effects of new technologies, such as social networking, on community.

A more optimistic (and, he would probably agree, anti-functionalist) view comes from William J. Mitchell, Professor of Architecture and Media Arts and Sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and author of such playful titles as *City of Bits*, and *e-topia: Urban Life, Jim--But Not as We Know It*. In a concise section on "communities" in one of his books, Mitchell admits that sociologists are correct to point out that urbanites get aid, support, and everything else they need from a few strong social ties, and many weaker ones. But for Mitchell these ties

"might manifest themselves ... as the entries in my cellphone and email directories" and they are now playing the same functions (in virtual, digital space) that once required "face-to-face contact within a contiguous locality -- a compact, place-based community."[37]

Today they involve a combination of local interactions and complex, shifting, and globe-spanning interactions through various forms of electronically mediated communication:

[35] E. Barbara Phillips (1996). *City Lights: Urban-Suburban Life in the Global Society, Second Edition*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, pp. 130-131.

[36] Terje Rasmussen (2003). "On Distributed Society: The Internet as a Guide to a Sociological Understanding of Communication." In Gunnar Liestøl, Andrew Morrison, and Terje Rasmussen, editors, *Digital Media Revisited: Theoretical and Conceptual Innovation in Digital Domains*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 443-467, quotes from p. 445.

[37] William J. Mitchell (2003). *Me++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, p. 17.

"The constants in my world are no longer provided by a contiguous home turf: increasingly, my sense of continuity and belonging derives from being electronically networked to the widely scattered people and places I care about."[38]

Community Reflecting Upon Itself? Not long after the social-networking site Facebook passed the 500-million mark of active users worldwide, the film "The Social Network" was released in theaters in late 2010. Not surprisingly, there is a Facebook page for people interested in the movie about Facebook's founder. About 76 thousand people expressed a "like" of the page. By the usual standards of Facebook, this figure seems surprisingly low. *Source:* Facebook.com, October 5, 2010, reproduced pursuant to Sections 29 ("Fair dealing for the purpose of research, private study, education, parody, or satire") and 30.04 ("work available through Internet") provisions of Canada Bill C-11.

There are, of course, two very different ways to respond to Mitchell's optimism on the networked self: one is a celebration of the emancipatory, flexible, mobile, and dynamic community -- as the analyst Barry Wellman puts it, living and working "in multiple sets of overlapping relationships, cycling among different networks."[39] But Louis Wirth might look at this situation as nothing less than the generalization of *anomie* to all places -- not just densely-packed cities. It is now technologically possible to be bombarded with thousands of emails,

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[38] Mitchell, *Me++*, p. 17.
[39] Barry Wellman (2002). "Designing the Internet for a Networked Society." *Communications of the ACM* 45(5), May, 91-96.

texts, status updates, friend requests, tweets, and other electronic missives every single hour -- everything from the serious, personal messages one gets from close friends, to the automated bill notices and confirmations you receive after almost every commercial transaction, to the flood of unsolicited "spam" from Internet marketing scammers and sons and daughters of dearly departed dictators seeking your bank account information so they can access that $50 million inheritance from the Swiss bank account. In this interconnected and information-saturated world, people need more and more "devices for immunizing themselves against the personal claims and expectations of others."[40] Indeed, there's an entire segment of the software industry -- the powerful and sophisticated innovations of spam-filtering applications, anti-virus software, and identity protection services -- devoted to precisely this immunization task.

Not all connections are inherently good, and the "virtual" communities of electronic spaces do have their risks. Not long ago, a small town in Missouri made national headlines with the growth of local, anonymous gossip on a social media site called Topix. A local diner owner called the site "a cesspool of character assassination," and one of the cooks working in the diner told a story as he "wandered out of the kitchen tense with anger.

> His wife, Jennifer, had been the target in a post titled 'freak,' he said, which described the mother of two as, among other things, 'a methed-out, doped-out whore with AIDS.' Not a word was true, Mr. and Ms. James said, but the consequences were real enough.
>
> Friends and relatives stopped speaking to them. Trips to the grocery store brought a crushing barrage of knowing glances. She wept constantly and even considered suicide. Now, the couple has resolved to move.
>
> 'I'll never come back to this town again,' Ms. James said in an interview at the diner. 'I just want to get the hell away from here.'"[41]

The social media site in question, it turns out, isn't very popular in large cities -- but it has grown rapidly in small-town communities of only a few hundred people across the Appalachians, the Ozarks, and the rural South -- what Topix's chief executive calls "the feud states."[42]

"Urbanism as a way of life" may have disappeared by spreading itself everywhere.

Now every place presents the individual with innumerable demands that force people into depersonalized, uncaring, instrumental, and sophisticated, calculating behavior. Urbanism as a way of life may have disappeared by spreading itself everywhere. Globe-spanning electronic networks may conquer the constraints of dense, physical cities, but they also facilitate their own distinctive forms of alienation. Indeed, the next sentence of Wellman's quote is this: "Many of the people and the
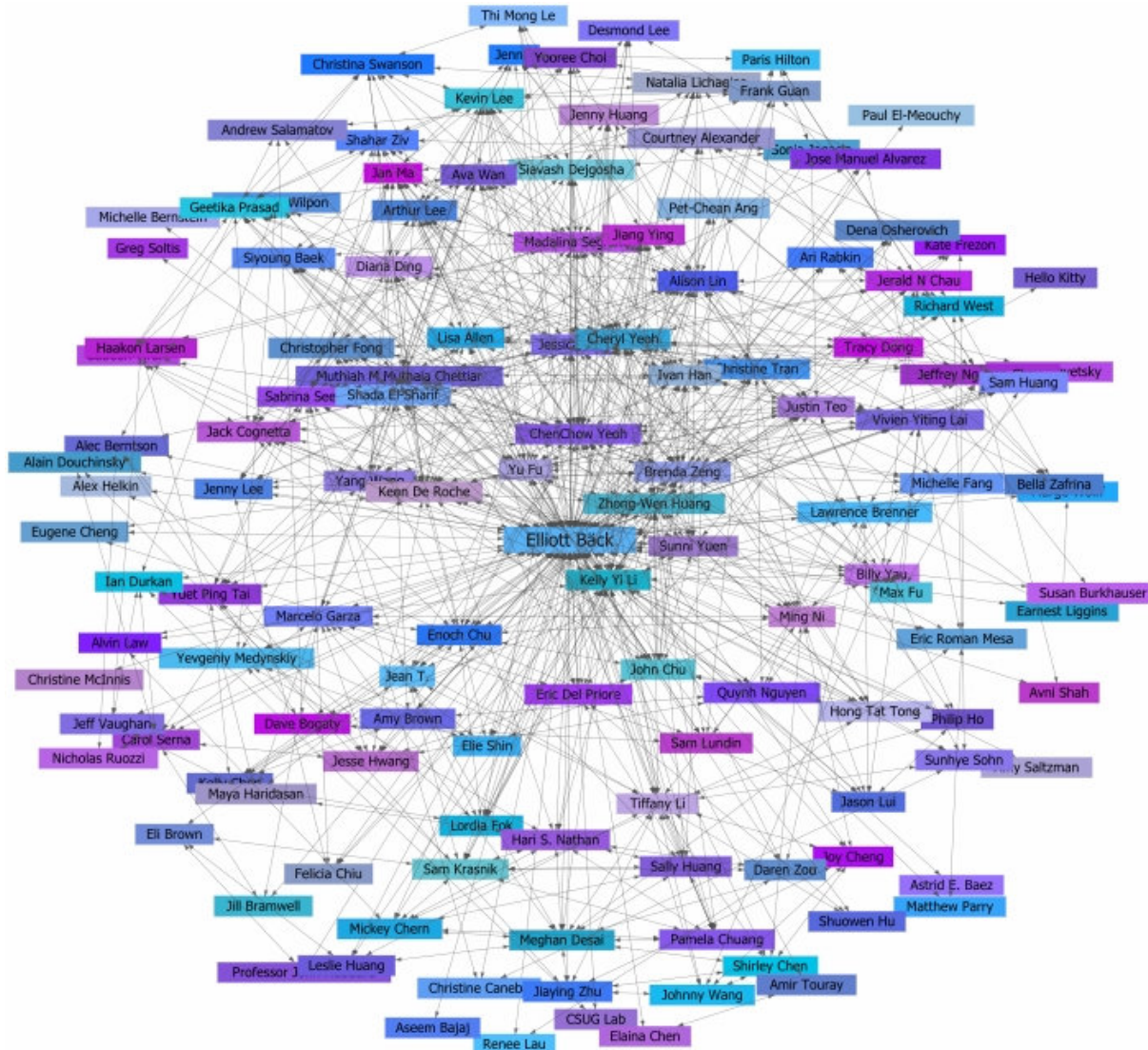
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[40] Wirth, "Urbanism," p. 71.
[41] A.G. Sulzberger (2011). "In Small Towns, Gossip Moves to the Web, and Turns Vicious." *New York Times*, September 19.
[42] Sulzberger, "Small Towns."

related social networks they deal with are sparsely knit, or physically dispersed and do not know one another."

What would Louis Wirth make of Facebook?

Is Facebook a Community? Is it a City? If it's a city, its current population estimate is more than 750 million. But what does it mean to "live" there? One private company that specializes in internet marketing, training, and "digital coaching" has developed tools to map online social networks as a means of understanding consumer behavior. "Social media and online social networks allow granular insights into how consumers behave and how they form and change their connections. Analysis of social networks reveals the complex web of connections and can help untangle how information flows through communities. Here is an example of a social network map from Facebook where the connections from one individual have been plotted. Although today's online social networks only reflect part of the connection people have, these snapshots provide a rich insight into both the individual person and their communities." *Source:* Digital Training Academy (2010). "Social Networking Map." London: Digital Training Academy, www.digitaltrainingacademy.com, reproduced pursuant to Sections 29 ("Fair dealing for the purpose of research, private study, education, parody, or satire") and 30.04 ("work available through Internet") provisions of Canada Bill C-11.

"He didn't have a home. But he had a community." Not long ago, a makeshift memorial appeared in the Student Union Building. A homeless man, Travers Roy Wimble, had regularly spent time here, sitting and reading the newspaper most days, for nearly 25 years. Some students called him Santa (for the beard), others called him Abraham Lincoln (seated in the chair, he looked like the Lincoln Memorial), and others called him "Chairbo." One night in February, 2012, he collapsed near the intersection of Wesbrook Mall and University Boulevard, and died by the time rescue services arrived. A story in the Ubyssey noted, "a campus is mourning in a way he might not have expected. He didn't have a home. But he had a community." Justin McElroy and Laura Rodgers (2012). "Travers Roy Wimble: 1928-2012." The Ubyssey, February 12.