

*Platform as play-form  
A lesson from Simmel*

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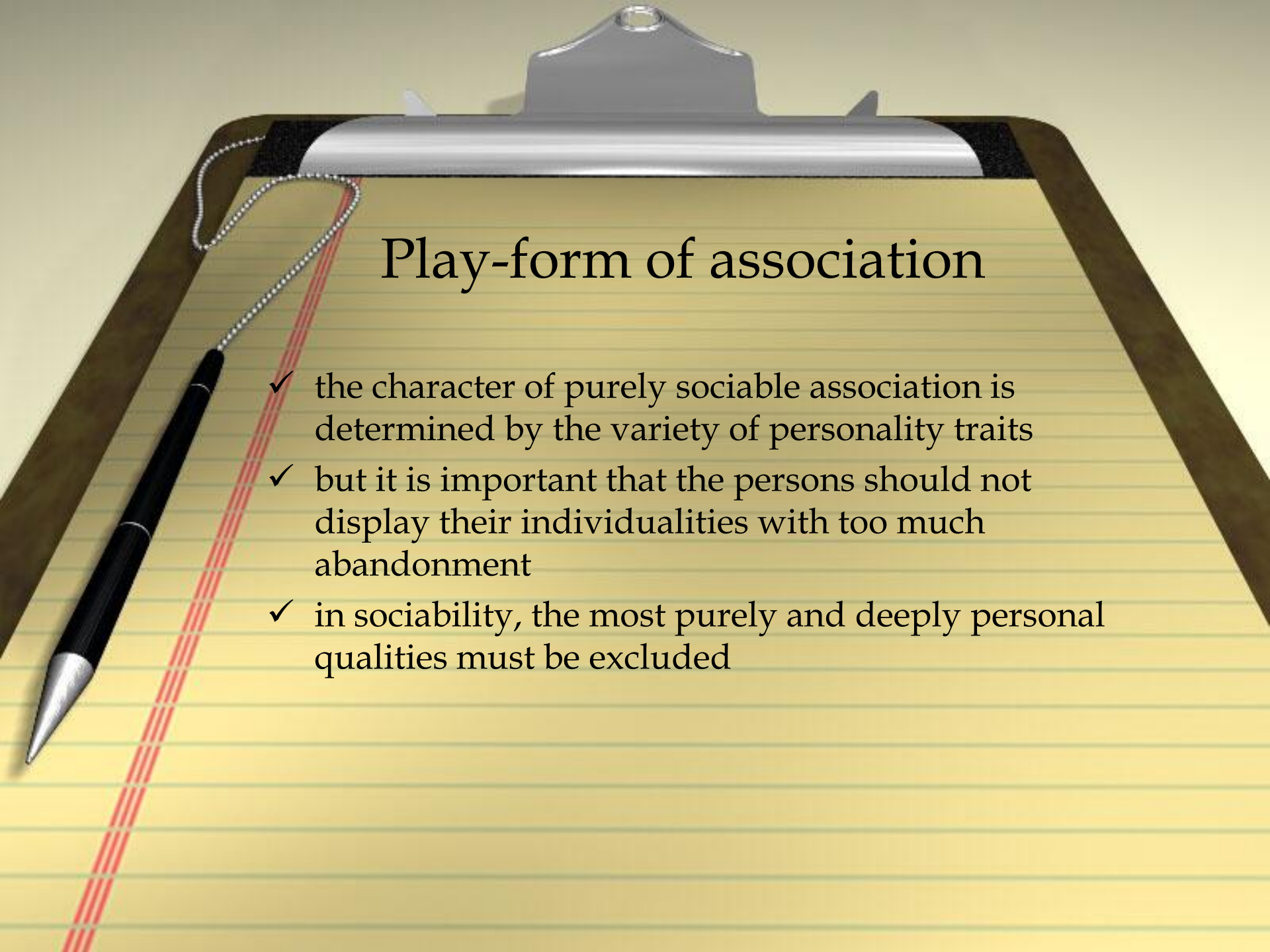
# Forms of social interaction

## Simmel

✓ exchange (1907), conflict (1908), domination (1908)

✓ **Sociability** (1910)

- ✓ sociability focuses on a symbolically playing fullness of life and on a meaning which superficial rationalism always seeks only in the content
- ✓ only the sociable gathering is "society" without qualifying adjectives, because it alone presents the pure, abstract play form



## Play-form of association

- ✓ the character of purely sociable association is determined by the variety of personality traits
- ✓ but it is important that the persons should not display their individualities with too much abandonment
- ✓ in sociability, the most purely and deeply personal qualities must be excluded

# Pure and stylized form

- ✓ conversation is the epitome of sociability as the abstraction of the forms of sociological interaction
- ✓ sociability needs a place. A place of freedom and true encounter. Pleasant relations and exchanges. A third place (Habermas). Where conversation emerges spontaneously, informally, “freewheel” ....



## Simmel in the information age (S.Lash, Jedlowsky)

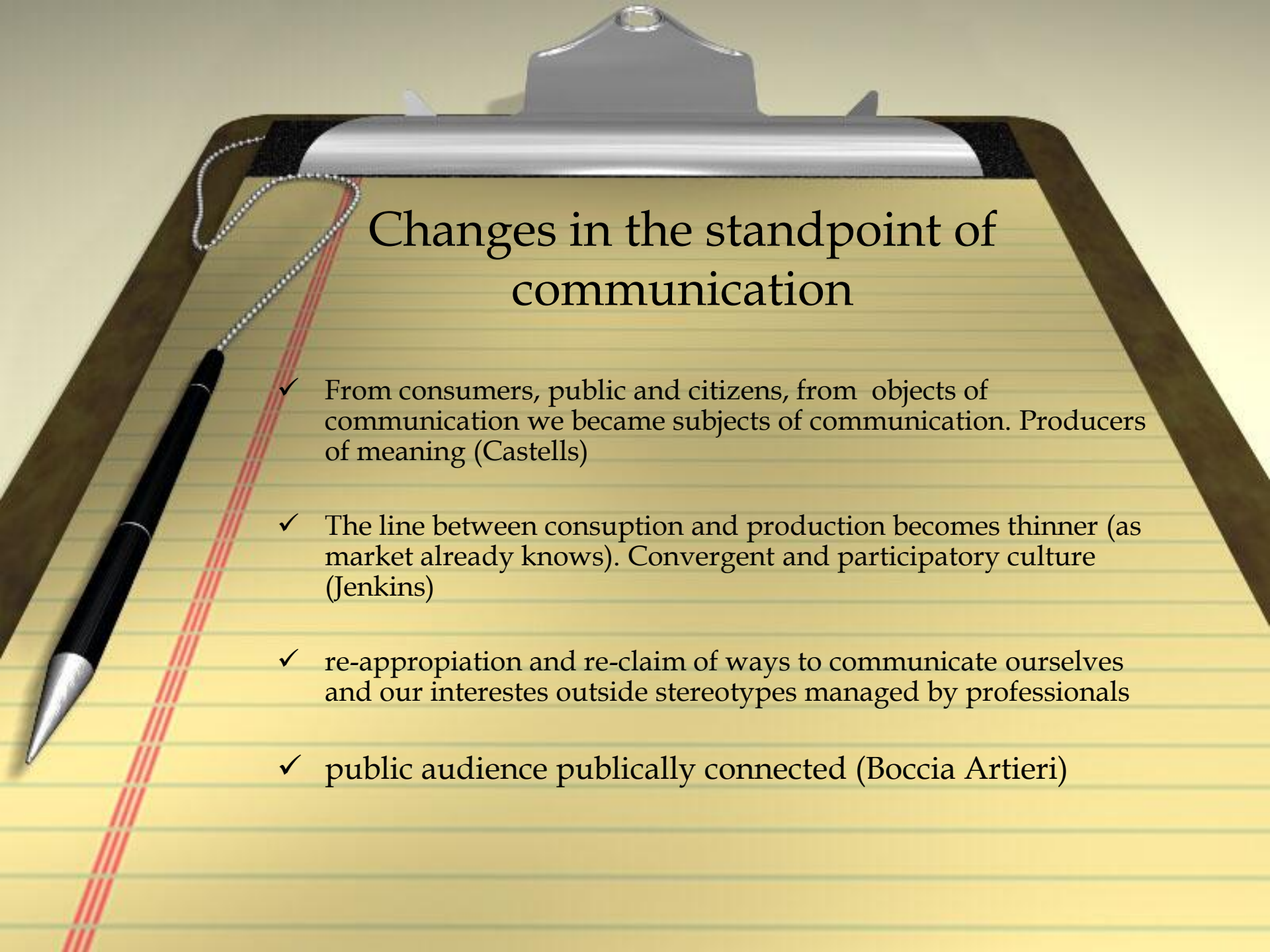
✓ Simmel's societalization (Vergesellschaftung) seems increasingly in the information age to be displaced by mediatization

✓ It is technology that makes possible intersubjectivity at a distance. The mediatization of forms is also their technologization



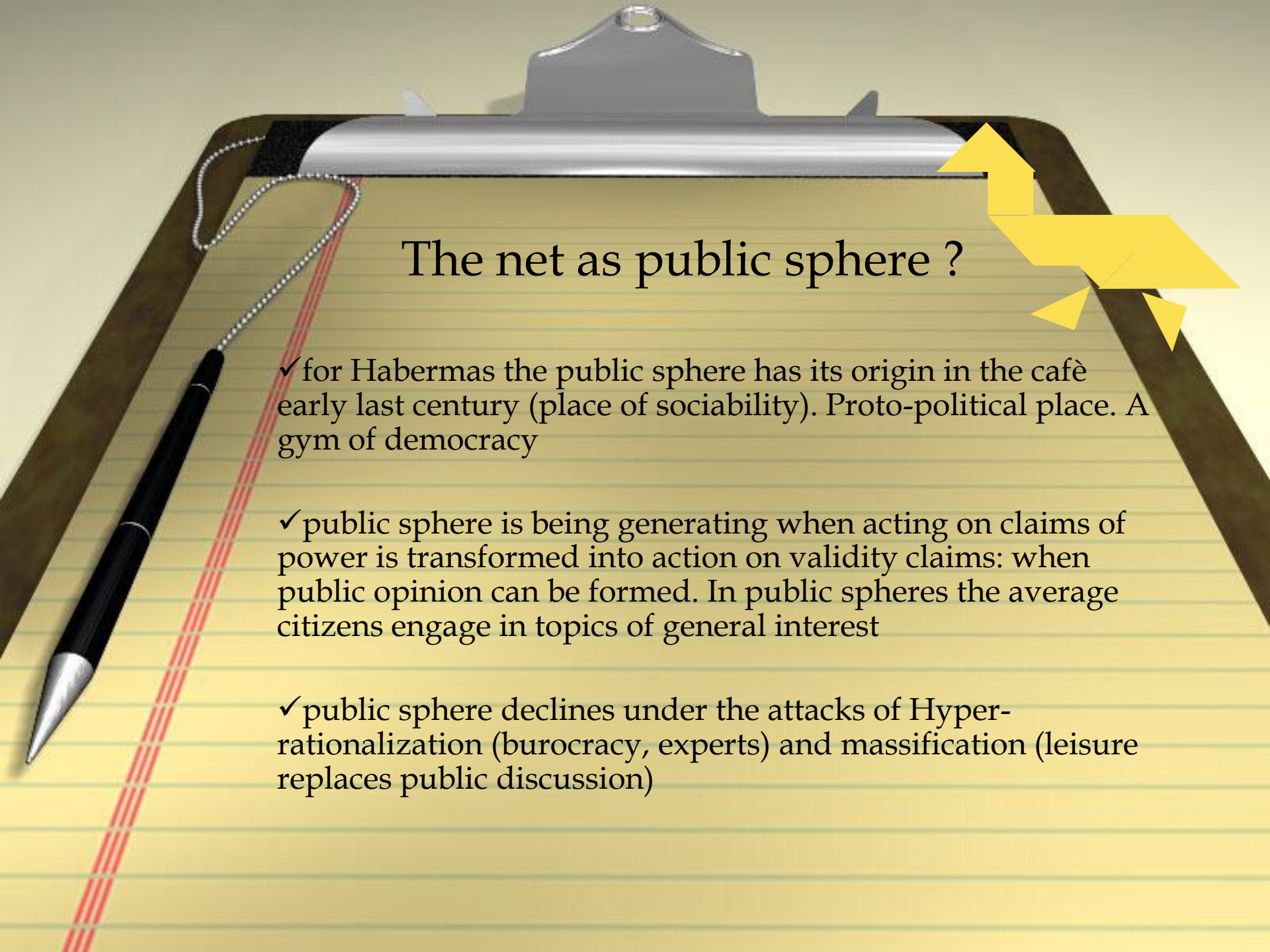
## Some features

- ✓ within the technology, the invisible wires which knit sociability (Simmel) become visible and tangible
- ✓ temporary, occasional, unstable relationships develop on the web a possibility of a constant connection
- ✓ uninhibited communication. *I am taking a bath; I am starting spinning*. Over-exposition. Semantics of intimacy
- ✓ trivial communication (flirting, flaming, stalking)
- ✓ FB: what is in your mind? You have to decide how to represent yourself. Self-observation (reflexivity)



## Changes in the standpoint of communication

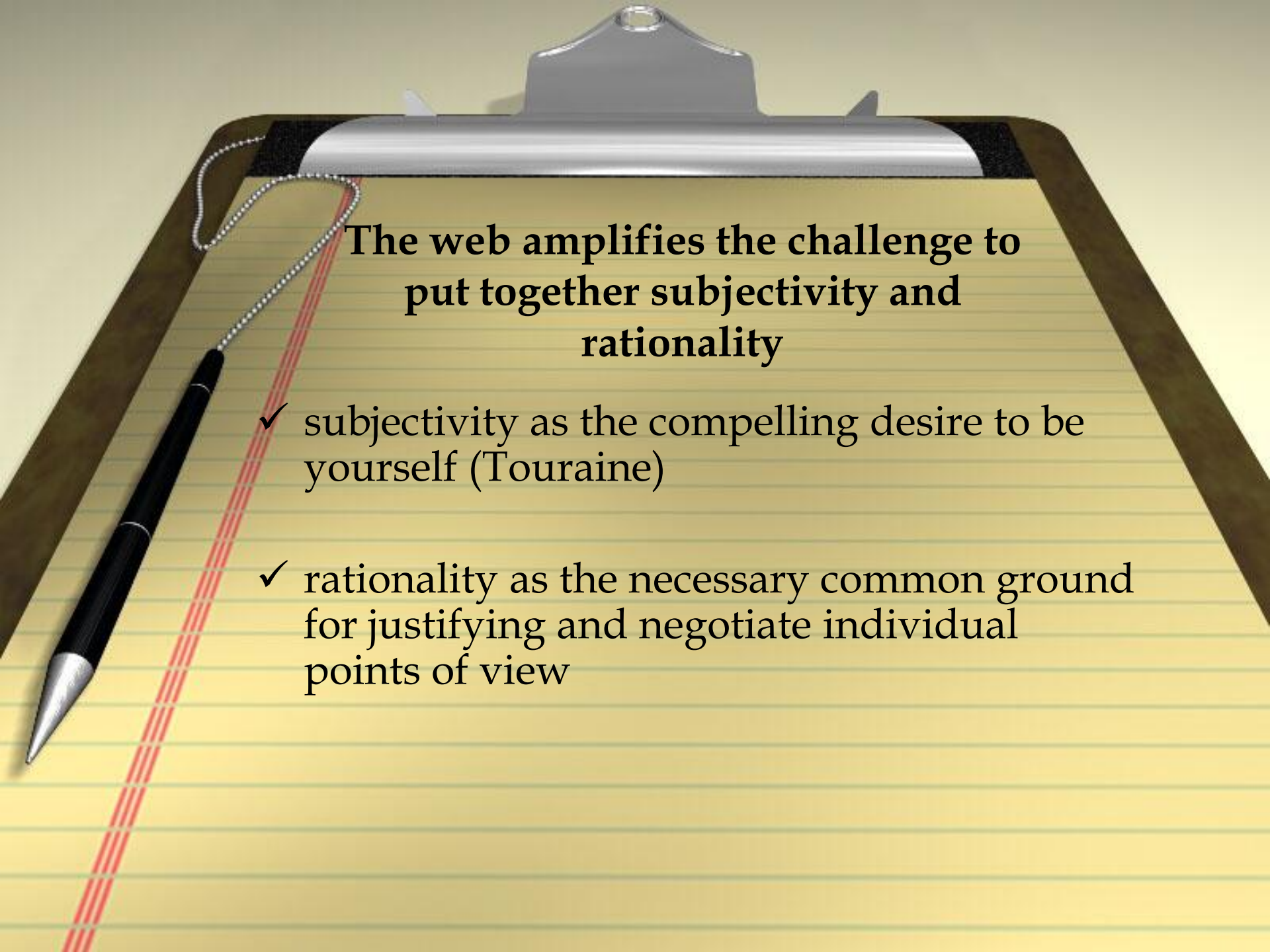
- ✓ From consumers, public and citizens, from objects of communication we became subjects of communication. Producers of meaning (Castells)
- ✓ The line between consumption and production becomes thinner (as market already knows). Convergent and participatory culture (Jenkins)
- ✓ re-appropriation and re-claim of ways to communicate ourselves and our interests outside stereotypes managed by professionals
- ✓ public audience publically connected (Boccia Artieri)



## The net as public sphere ?

- ✓ for Habermas the public sphere has its origin in the café early last century (place of sociability). Proto-political place. A gym of democracy
- ✓ public sphere is being generating when acting on claims of power is transformed into action on validity claims: when public opinion can be formed. In public spheres the average citizens engage in topics of general interest
- ✓ public sphere declines under the attacks of Hyper-rationalization (burocracy, experts) and massification (leisure replaces public discussion)





**The web amplifies the challenge to  
put together subjectivity and  
rationality**

- ✓ subjectivity as the compelling desire to be yourself (Touraine)
- ✓ rationality as the necessary common ground for justifying and negotiate individual points of view