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 comunication (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 negotiating individual points of view