"Manuel Castells demonstrates with a worldwide documentation and great analytical depth that contemporary social and political movements must be understood as actors in a central conflict between networks and collective identities whose defense takes a negative as well as a positive force. This book will be for the coming years a central reference for all sociologists and political scientists." *Alain Touraine, Professor of Sociology, and founder of the Center for the Study of Social Movements, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris*

"Castells creates a new and challenging analysis of informational society and the global forces which are reshaping states, ethnicity, ideology, and gender around the world. This book presents a powerful theory of the new world disorder, and of what others have viewed as an indescribable postmodern landscape. It is a broad, in-depth, and original view of the changes we are all experiencing." *Ida Susser, Professor of Anthropology, Hunter College New York. President of the Society for the Anthropology of North America*

"Castells explains the paradox by which we are witnessing an explosion of nationalism simultaneously with a crisis of the nation state . . . [He] excels both in the broad sweep of connected theory and in the detailed narrative account . . . He provides a professional sociologist's analysis of our age." *Anthony Smith, The Times Higher Education Supplement*

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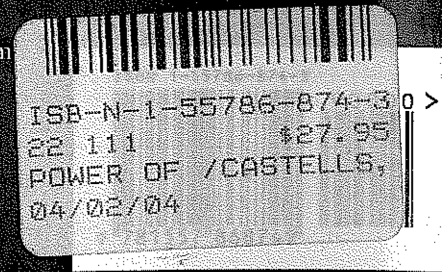

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THE INFORMATION AGE: ECONOMY, SOCIETY AND CULTURE Volume II

Castells

THE POWER OF IDENTITY

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THE POWER OF IDENTITY

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nation-states because they receive the attributes of sovereignty on the basis of a historically constituted national identity (for example, Ukraine). But they are "quasi" because the entangled set of relationships with their historical matrix forces them to share sovereignty with either their former state or a broader configuration (for example, the CIS; Eastern European republics associated with the European Union). Secondly, we observe the development of nations that stop at the threshold of statehood, but force their parent state to adapt, and cede sovereignty, as in the case of *Catalunya*, the Basque Country, Flanders, Wallonie, Scotland, Quebec, and, potentially, Kurdistan, Kashmir, Punjab, or East Timor. I label these entities *national quasi-states*, because they are not fully fledged states, but win a share of political autonomy on the basis of their national identity.

The attributes that reinforce national identity in this historical period vary, although, in all cases, they presuppose the sharing of history over time. However, *I would make the hypothesis that language, and particularly a fully developed language, is a fundamental attribute of self-recognition, and of the establishment of an invisible national boundary less arbitrary than territoriality, and less exclusive than ethnicity.* This is, in a historical perspective, because language provides the linkage between the private and the public sphere, and between the past and the present, regardless of the actual acknowledgment of a cultural community by the institutions of the state. And it is not because Fichte used this argument to build pan-German nationalism that the historical record should be discarded. But there is also a powerful reason for the emergence of language-based nationalism in our societies. If nationalism is, most often, a reaction against a threatened autonomous identity, then, in a world submitted to cultural homogenization by the ideology of modernization and the power of global media, language, as the direct expression of culture, becomes the trench of cultural resistance, the last bastion of self-control, the refuge of identifiable meaning. Thus, after all, nations do not seem to be "imagined communities" constructed at the service of power apparatuses. Rather, they are produced through the labors of shared history, and then spoken in the images of communal languages whose first word is *we*, the second is *us*, and, unfortunately, the third is *them*.

Ethnic Unbonding: Race, Class, and Identity in the Network Society

See you 100 Black Men. . . . See you jailed. See you caged. See you tamed. See you pain. See you fronting. See you lamping. See you want. See you need. See you dissed. See you Blood. See you Crip. See you Brother.

See you sober. See you loved. See you peace. See you home. See you listen. See you love. See you on it. See you faithful. See you chumped. See you challenged. See you change. See you. See you. See you . . . I definitely wanna be you.

Peter J. Harris, "Praisesong for the Anonymous Brothers"[125]

Do *you* want, as well? Really? Ethnicity has been a fundamental source of meaning and recognition throughout human history. It is a founding structure of social differentiation, and social recognition, as well as of discrimination, in many contemporary societies, from the United States to Sub-Saharan Africa. It has been, and it is, the basis for uprisings in search of social justice, as for Mexican Indians in Chiapas in 1994, as well as the irrational rationale for ethnic cleansing, as practiced by Bosnian Serbs in 1994. And it is, to a large extent, the cultural basis that induces networking and trust-based transactions in the new business world, from Chinese business networks (volume I, chapter 3) to the ethnic "tribes" that determine success in the new global economy. Indeed, as Cornel West writes: "In this age of globalization, with its impressive scientific and technological innovations in information, communication, and applied biology, a focus on the lingering effects of racism seems outdated and antiquated . . . Yet race – in the coded language of welfare reform, immigration policy, criminal punishment, affirmative action, and suburban privatization – remains a central signifier in the political debate."[126] However, if race and ethnicity are central – to America, as to other societies' dynamics – their manifestations seem to be deeply altered by current societal trends.[127] I contend that while race matters, probably more than ever as a source of oppression and discrimination,[128] ethnicity is being specified as a source of meaning and identity, to be melted not with other ethnicities, but under broader principles of cultural self-definition, such as religion, nation, or gender. To convey the arguments in support of this hypothesis I shall discuss, briefly, the evolution of African-American identity in the United States.

The contemporary condition of African-Americans has been transformed in the past three decades by a fundamental phenomenon: their profound division along class lines, as shown in the pioneering work of William Julius Wilson,[129] the implications of which shattered for ever the way America sees African-Americans, and, even more

125 From Wideman and Preston (1995: xxi).
126 West (1996: 107–8).
127 Appiah and Gates (1995).
128 Wieviorka (1993); West (1995).
129 Wilson (1987).

importantly, the way African-Americans see themselves. Supported by a stream of research in the past decade, Wilson's thesis, and its development, points at a dramatic polarization among African-Americans. On the one hand, spurred by the civil rights movement of the 1960s, particularly thanks to affirmative action programs, a large, well-educated, and relatively comfortable African-American middle class has emerged, making significant inroads into the political power structure, from mayoral offices to chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and, to some extent, in the corporate world. Thus, about a third of African-Americans are now part of the American middle class, although men, unlike women, still make much less money than their white counterparts. On the other hand, about a third of African-Americans, comprising 45 percent of African-American children at or below the poverty level, are much worse off in the 1990s than they were in the 1960s. Wilson, joined by other researchers, such as Blakely and Goldsmith, or Gans, attributes the formation of this "underclass" to the combined effect of an unbalanced information economy, of spatial segregation, and of misled public policy. The growth of an information economy emphasizes education, and reduces the availability of stable manual jobs, disadvantaging blacks at the entry level of the job market. Middle-class blacks escape the inner city, leaving behind, entrapped, the masses of the urban poor. To close the circle, the new black political elite finds support among the urban poor voters, but only as long as they can deliver social programs, which is a function of how worrisome, morally or politically, urban poor are for the white majority. Thus, new black political leadership is based on its ability to be the intermediary between the corporate world, the political establishment, and the ghettoized, unpredictable poor. Between these two groups, the final third of African-Americans strives not to fall into the poverty hell, hanging onto service jobs, disproportionately in the public sector, and to educational and vocational training programs that provide some skills to survive in a deindustrializing economy.[130] The punishment for those who do not succeed is increasingly atrocious. Among poorly educated, central-city black male residents in 1992, barely one-third held full-time jobs. And even among those who do work, 15 percent are below the poverty line. The average net worth of assets of the poorest fifth of blacks in 1995 was exactly zero. One-third of poor black households lives in substandard housing, meaning, among other criteria, "to show evidence of rats." The ratio of urban crime rate over suburban crime rate has grown from 1.2 to 1.6 between 1973 and 1992. And, of course, inner-

[130] Wilson (1987); Blakely and Goldsmith (1993); Carnoy (1994); Wacquant (1994); Gans (1995); Hochschild (1995); Gates (1996).

city residents are those who suffer most from these crimes. Furthermore, the poor male black population is subjected to massive incarceration, or lives under the control of the penal system (awaiting trial, probation). While blacks are about 12 percent of the American population, in the 1990s they account for more than 50 percent of prison inmates.[131] The overall incarceration rate for black Americans in 1990 was 1,860 per 100,000, that is 6.4 times higher than for whites. And, yes, African-Americans are better educated, but in 1993 23,000 black men received a college diploma, while 2.3 million were incarcerated.[132] If we add all persons under supervision of the penal system in America in the 1996, we reach 5.4 million people. Blacks represented 53 percent of inmates in 1991.[133] The ratios of incarceration and surveillance are much higher among poor blacks, and staggering among black young males. In cities such as Washington DC, for age groups 18–30, the majority of black males are in prison or on probation. Women, and families, have to adjust to this situation. The notorious argument of the absent male in the poor African-American family has to account for the fact that many poor men spend considerable periods of their life in prison, so that women have to be prepared to raise children by themselves, or to give birth on their own responsibility.

These are well-known facts, whose social roots in the new technological and economic context I shall try to analyze in volume III. But I am concerned, at this point in my analysis, with the consequences of such a deep class divide on the transformation of African-American identity.

To comprehend this transformation since the 1960s, we must go back to the historical roots of this identity: as Cornel West argues, blacks in America are precisely African and American. Their identity was constituted as kidnapped, enslaved people under the freest society of the time. Thus, to conciliate the obvious contradiction between the ideals of freedom, and the highly productive, slavery-based economy, America had to deny the humanity of blacks because only non-humans could be denied freedom in a society constituted on the principle that "all men are born equal." As Cornel West writes: "This unrelenting assault on black humanity produced the fundamental condition of black culture – that of *black invisibility* and *namelessness*."[134] Thus, black culture, following Cornel's analysis, had to learn to cope with its negation without falling into self-annihilation.

[131] Tonry (1995: 59).
[132] Gates (1996: 25).
[133] See volume III, chapter 2.
[134] West (1996: 80).

It did. From songs to art, from communal churches to brotherhood, black society emerged with a deep sense of collective meaning, not lost during the massive rural exodus to the Northern ghettos, translated into extraordinary creativity in art, music, and literature, and into a powerful, multifaceted political movement, whose dreams and potential were personified by Martin Luther King Jr in the 1960s.

Yet, the fundamental divide introduced among blacks by the partial success of the civil rights movement has transformed this cultural landscape. But, how exactly? At first sight, it would seem that the black middle class, building on its relative economic affluence and political influence, could be assimilated into the mainstream, constituting itself under a new identity, as African-Americans, moving toward a position similar to that of Italian-Americans, or Chinese-Americans. After all, Chinese-Americans were highly discriminated against for most of California's history, yet they have reached in recent years a rather respected social status. Thus, in this perspective, African-Americans could become another, distinctive segment in the multi-ethnic quilt of American society. While, on the other hand, the "underclass" would become more poor than black.

Yet, this thesis of a dual cultural evolution does not seem to hold when checked against available data. Jennifer Hochschild's powerful study of the cultural transformation of blacks and whites in their relationship to the "American Dream" of equal opportunity and individual mobility shows exactly the contrary.[135] Middle-class blacks are precisely those who feel bitter about the frustrated illusion of the American Dream, and feel most discriminated against by the permanence of racism, while a majority of whites feel that blacks are being unduly favored by affirmative action policies, and complain about reverse discrimination. On the other hand, poor blacks, while fully conscious of racism, seem to believe in the American Dream to a greater extent than middle-class blacks, and, in any case, are more fatalistic and/or individualistic about their fate (it always was like this), although a temporal perspective in the evolution of opinion polls seems to indicate that poor blacks, too, are losing whatever faith in the system they had. Still, the major fact that clearly stands out from Hochschild's effort to bring to the analysis a wealth of empirical data is that, by and large, affluent African-Americans do not feel welcome in mainstream society. Indeed, they are not. Not only racial hostility among whites continues to be pervasive, but gains by middle-class black males still leave them way behind whites in education, occupation, and income, as shown by Martin Carnoy.[136]

135 Hochschild (1995).
136 Carnoy (1994).

So, race matters a lot.[137] But, at the same time, the class divide among blacks has created such fundamentally different living conditions that there is growing hostility among the poor against those former brothers that left them out.[138] Most middle-class blacks strive to get ahead not only from the reality of the ghetto, but from the stigma that the echoes from the dying ghetto project on them through their skin. They do so, particularly, by insulating their children from the poor black communities (moving to suburbs, integrating them into white-dominated private schools), while, at the same time, re-inventing an African-American identity that revives the themes of the past, African or American, while keeping silent on the plight of the present.

In a parallel move, end-of-millennium ghettos develop a new culture, made out of affliction, rage, and individual reaction against collective exclusion, where blackness matters less than the situations of exclusion that create new sources of bonding, for instance, territorial gangs, started in the streets, and consolidated in and from the prisons.[139] Rap, not jazz, emerges from this culture. This new culture expresses identity, as well, and it is also rooted in black history, and in the venerable American tradition of racism and racial oppression, but it incorporates new elements: the police and penal system as central institutions, the criminal economy as a shop floor, the schools as contested terrain, churches as islands of conciliation, mother-centered families, rundown environments, gang-based social organization, violence as a way of life. These are the themes of new black art and literature emerging from the new ghetto experience.[140] But it is not the same identity, by any means, as the identity emerging in middle-class African-America through the careful reconstruction of the humanity of the race.

Yet, even accepting their cultural split, both sets of identities face what appear to be insuperable difficulties in their constitution. This is, for affluent African-Americans, because of the following contradiction:[141] they feel the rejection of institutional racism, so that they can only integrate into the American mainstream as leaders of their kin, as the "Talented Tenth" that Du Bois, the leading black intellectual at the turn of the century, considered to be the necessary saviors of "the negro race," as for all races.[142] But the social, economic, and

137 West (1996).
138 Hochschild (1995); Gates (1996).
139 Sanchez Jankowski (1991, 1996).
140 Wideman and Preston (1995); Giroux (1996).
141 Hochschild (1995).
142 Gates and West (1996: 133).

cultural divide between the "Talented Tenth" and a significant, growing proportion of black America is such that they would have to deny themselves, and their children, accomplishing such a role, to become part of a pluri-class, multiracial coalition of progressive social change. In their superb little book debating this question, Henry Louis Gates Jr and Cornel West seem to think, on the one hand, that there is no other alternative, and yet, they do have reasonable doubts of the feasibility of such an option. Gates: "The real crisis of black leadership is that the very idea of black leadership is in crisis."[143] West:

> Since a multi-racial alliance of progressive middlers, liberal slices of the corporate elite, and subversive energy from below is the only vehicle by which some form of radical democratic accountability can redistribute resources and wealth and restructure the economy and government so that all benefit, the significant secondary efforts of the black Talented Tenth alone in the twenty-first century will be woefully inadequate and thoroughly frustrating.[144]

Indeed, Du Bois himself left America for Ghana in 1961 because, he said, "I just cannot take any more of this country's treatment . . . Chin up, and fight on, but realize that American Negroes can't win."[145]

Will this failure of full integration efforts lead to a revival of black separatism in America? Could this be the new basis for identity, in direct line with the radical 1960s movements, as exemplified by the Black Panthers? It would seem so, at least among the militant youth, if we were to pay attention to the renewed cult of Malcolm X, the growing influence of Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, or, even more so, the extraordinary impact of the 1995 "Million Men March" in Washington DC, built around atonement, morality, and black male pride. Yet, these new manifestations of cultural–political identity reveal further cleavages among African-Americans, and they are actually organized around principles of self-identification that are not ethnic but religious (Islam, black churches), and strongly gendered (male pride, male responsibility, subordination of females). The impact of the "Million Men March," and its foreseeable development in the future, cuts across class lines, but shrinks the gender basis of African-American identity, and blurs the lines between religious, racial, and class self-identification. In other words, it was not based on identity but on the reflection of a disappearing identity. How can it be that, while society is reminding blacks every minute that they are black (thus, a different, stigmatized human kind, coming in a long journey from non-humanity), blacks themselves are living so many different lives, so as not to be able to share, and, instead, being increasingly violent against each other? It is this yearning for the lost community that is emerging in black America in the 1990s – because perhaps the deepest wound inflicted on African-Americans in the past decade has been the gradual loss of collective identity, leading to individual drifting while still bearing a collective stigma.

[143] Gates (1996: 38).
[144] West (1996: 110).
[145] Gates and West (1996: 111).

This is not a necessary process. Socio-political movements such as Jessie Jackson's "Rainbow Coalition," among others, continue to try hard to bring together black churches, minorities, communities, unions, and women, under a common banner to fight politically for social justice and racial equality. Yet, this is a process of building a political identity that only if fully successful in the long term could create a collective, cultural identity that would be necessarily new for both whites and blacks, if it is to overcome racism while maintaining historical, cultural differences. Cornel West, while acknowledging a "hope not hopeless but unhopeful," calls for "radical democracy" to transcend both racial divisions and black nationalism.[146] But in the ghetto trenches, and in the corporate boardrooms, historical African-American identity is being fragmented, and individualized, without yet being integrated into a multiracial, open society.

Thus, I formulate the hypothesis that ethnicity does not provide the basis for communal heavens in the network society, because it is based on primary bonds that lose significance, when cut from their historical context, as a basis for reconstruction of meaning in a world of flows and networks, of recombination of images, and reassignment of meaning. Ethnic materials are integrated into cultural communes that are more powerful, and more broadly defined than ethnicity, such as religion or nationalism, as statements of cultural autonomy in a world of symbols. Or else, ethnicity becomes the foundation for defensive trenches, then territorialized in local communities, or even gangs, defending their turf. Between cultural communes and self-defense territorial units, ethnic roots are twisted, divided, reprocessed, mixed, differentially stigmatized or rewarded, according to a new logic of informationalization/globalization of cultures and economies that makes symbolic composites out of blurred identities. Race matters, but it hardly constructs meaning any longer.

[146] West (1996: 112).

Territorial Identities: the Local Community

One of the oldest debates in urban sociology refers to the loss of community as a result of urbanization first, and of suburbanization later. Empirical research some time ago, most notably by Claude Fischer and by Barry Wellman,[147] seems to have put to rest the simplistic notion of a systematic co-variation between space and culture. People socialize and interact in their local environment, be it in the village, in the city, or in the suburb, and they build social networks among their neighbors. On the other hand, locally based identities intersect with other sources of meaning and social recognition, in a highly diversified pattern that allows for alternative interpretations. So, where, in recent years, Etzioni sees the revival of community to a large extent on a local basis, Putnam watches the disintegration of the Tocquevillian vision of an intense civil society in America, with membership and activity in voluntary associations dropping substantially in the 1980s.[148] Reports from other areas of the world are equally conflicting in their estimates. However, I do not think it would be inaccurate to say that local environments, *per se*, do not induce a specific pattern of behavior, or, for that matter, a distinctive identity. Yet, what communalist authors would argue, and what is consistent with my own cross-cultural observation, is that people resist the process of individualization and social atomization, and tend to cluster in community organizations that, over time, generate a feeling of belonging, and ultimately, in many cases, a communal, cultural identity. I introduce the hypothesis that for this to happen, a process of social mobilization is necessary. That is, people must engage in urban movements (not quite revolutionary), through which common interests are discovered, and defended, life is shared somehow, and new meaning may be produced.

I know something about this subject, having spent a decade of my life studying urban social movements around the world.[149] Summarizing my findings, as well as the relevant literature, I proposed that urban movements (processes of purposive social mobilization, organized in a given territory, oriented toward urban-related goals) were focused on three main sets of goals: urban demands on living conditions and collective consumption; the affirmation of local cultural identity; and the conquest of local political autonomy and citizen participation. Different movements combined these three sets of goals in various proportions, and the outcomes of their efforts were

147 Wellman (1979); Fischer (1982).
148 Etzioni (1993); Putnam (1995).
149 Castells (1983).

equally diversified. Yet, in many instances, regardless of the explicit achievements of the movement, its very existence produced meaning, not only for the movement's participants, but for the community at large. And not only during the lifespan of the movement (usually brief), but in the collective memory of the locality. Indeed, I argued, and I argue, that this production of meaning is an essential component of cities, throughout history, as the built environment, and its meaning, is constructed through a conflictive process between the interests and values of opposing social actors.

I added something else, referring to the historical moment of my observation (the late 1970s, early 1980s), but projecting my view toward the future: urban movements were becoming critical sources of resistance to the one-sided logic of capitalism, statism, and informationalism. This was, essentially, because the failure of proactive movements and politics (for example, the labor movement, political parties) to counter economic exploitation, cultural domination, and political oppression had left people with no other choice than either to surrender or to react on the basis of the most immediate source of self-recognition and autonomous organization: their locality. Thus, so emerged the paradox of increasingly local politics in a world structured by increasingly global processes. There was production of meaning and identity: my neighborhood, my community, my city, my school, my tree, my river, my beach, my chapel, my peace, my environment. But it was a defensive identity, an identity of retrenchment of the known against the unpredictability of the unknown and uncontrollable. Suddenly defenseless against a global whirlwind, people stuck to themselves: whatever they had, and whatever they were, became their identity. I wrote in 1983:

> Urban movements do address the real issues of our time, although neither on the scale nor terms that are adequate to the task. And yet they do not have any choice since they are the last reaction to the domination and renewed exploitation that submerges our world. But they are more than a last symbolic stand and a desperate cry: they are symptoms of our own contradictions, and therefore potentially capable of superseding these contradictions . . . They do produce new historical meaning – in the twilight zone of pretending to build within the walls of a local community a new society they know unattainable. And they do so by nurturing the embryos of tomorrow's social movements within the local utopias that urban movements have constructed in order never to surrender to barbarism."[150]

150 Castells (1983: 331).

What has happened since then? The empirical answer is, of course, extraordinarily diverse, particularly if we look across cultures and areas of the world.[151] I would, however, venture, for the sake of the analysis, to synthetize urban movements' main trajectories in the 1980s and 1990s under four headings.

First, in many cases, urban movements, and their discourses, actors, and organizations, have been integrated in the structure and practice of local government, either directly or indirectly, through a diversified system of citizen participation, and community development. This trend, while liquidating urban movements as sources of alternative social change, has considerably reinforced local government, and introduced the possibility of the local state as a significant instance of reconstruction of political control and social meaning. I will return to this fundamental development in chapter 5, when analyzing the overall transformation of the state.

Secondly, local communities, and their organizations, have indeed nurtured the grassroots of a widespread, and influential, environmental movement, particularly in middle-class neighborhoods, and in the suburbs, exurbia, and urbanized countryside (see chapter 3). However, these movements are often defensive and reactive, focusing on the strictest conservation of their space and immediate environment, as exemplified, in the United States, by the "not in my backyard" attitude, mixing in the same rejection toxic waste, nuclear plants, public housing projects, prisons, and mobile home settlements. I will make a major distinction, which I will develop in chapter 3 when analyzing the environmental movement, between the search for controlling space (a defensive reaction), and the search for controlling time; that is, for the preservation of nature, and of the planet, for future generations, in a very long term, thus adopting cosmological time, and rejecting the instant time approach of instrumentalist development. Identities emerging from these two perspectives are quite different, as defensive spaces lead to collective individualism, and offensive timing opens up the reconciliation between culture and nature, thus introducing a new, holistic philosophy of life.

Thirdly, a vast number of poor communities around the world have engaged in collective survival, as with the communal kitchens that flourished in Santiago de Chile or Lima during the 1980s. Be it in squatter settlements in Latin America, in American inner cities, or in working-class neighborhoods in Asian cities, communities have built their own "welfare states" (in the absence of responsible public policies) on the basis of networks of solidarity and reciprocity, often

[151] Massolo (1992); Fisher and Kling (1993); Calderon (1995); Judge et al. (1995); Tanaka (1995); Borja and Castells (1996); Hsia (1996); Yazawa (forthcoming).

around churches, or supported by internationally funded nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); sometimes with the help of leftist intellectuals. These organized, local communities have played, and continue to play, a major role in the daily survival of a significant proportion of the world's urban population, at the threshold of famine and epidemic. This trend was illustrated, for instance, by the experience of community associations organized by the Catholic Church in São Paulo in the 1980s,[152] or by internationally sponsored NGOs in Bogota in the 1990s.[153] In most of these cases, a communal identity does emerge, although very often it is absorbed into a religious faith, to the point that I would risk the hypothesis that this kind of communalism is, essentially, a religious commune, linked to the consciousness of being the exploited and/or the excluded. Thus, people organizing in poor local communities may feel revitalized, and acknowledged as human beings, by and through religious deliverance.

Fourthly, there is a darker side of the story, concerning the evolution of urban movements, particularly in segregated urban areas, a trend that I foresaw some time ago:

> If urban movements' appeals are not heard, if the new political avenues remain closed, if the new central social movements (feminism, new labor, self-management, alternative communication) do not develop fully, then the urban movements – reactive utopias that tried to illuminate the path they could not walk – will return, but this time as urban shadows eager to destroy the closed walls of their captive city.[154]

Fortunately, the failure was not total, and the diversified expression of organized local communities did provide avenues of reform, survival, and self-identification, in spite of the lack of major social movements able to articulate change in the new society emerging in the past two decades. Yet, harsh policies of economic adjustment in the 1980s, a widespread crisis of political legitimacy, and the exclusionary impact of the flows over the space of places (see volume I), took their toll on social life and organization in poor local communities. In American cities, gangs emerged as a major form of association, work, and identity for hundreds of thousands of youths. Indeed, as Sanchez Jankowski has showed in his first-hand, comprehensive study of gangs,[155] they play a structuring role in many areas,

[152] Cardoso de Leite (1983); Gohn (1991).
[153] Espinosa and Useche (1992).
[154] Castells (1983: 327).
[155] Sanchez Jankowski (1991).

which explains the ambiguous feeling of local residents toward them, partly fearful, yet partly feeling able to relate to the gang society better than to mainstream institutions, which are usually present only in their repressive manifestation. Gangs, or their functional equivalent, are not, by any means, an American graffiti. The *pandillas* in most Latin American cities are a key element of sociability in poor neighborhoods, and so are they in Jakarta, in Bangkok, in Manila, in Mantes-la-Jolie (Paris), or in Meseta de Orcasitas (Madrid). Gangs are, however, an old story in many societies, particularly in America (remember William White's *Street Corner Society*). Yet there is something new in the gangs of the 1990s, characterizing the construction of identity as the twisted mirror of informational culture. It is what Magaly Sanchez and Yves Pedrazzini, on the basis of their study of the *malandros* (bad boys) of Caracas, call the *culture of urgency*.[156] It is a culture of the immediate end of life, not of its negation, but of its celebration. Thus, everything has to be tried, felt, experimented, accomplished, before it is too late, since there is no tomorrow. Is this really so different from the culture of consumerist narcissism *à la* Lasch? Have the bad boys of Caracas, or elsewhere, understood faster than the rest of us what our new society is all about? Is the new gang identity the culture of communal hyper-individualism? Individualism because, in the immediate gratification pattern, only the individual can be a proper accounting unit. Communalism because, for this hyper-individualism to be an identity – that is, to be socialized as value not just as senseless consumption – it needs a milieu of appreciation and reciprocal support: a commune, as in White's times. But, unlike White's, this commune is ready to explode at any time, it is a commune of the end of time, it is a commune of timeless time, characterizing the network society. And it exists, and explodes, territorially. Local cultures of urgency are the reverse expression of global timelessness.

Thus, local communities, constructed through collective action and preserved through collective memory, are specific sources of identities. But these identities, in most cases, are defensive reactions against the impositions of global disorder and uncontrollable, fast-paced change. They do build havens, but not heavens.

[156] Sanchez and Pedrazzini (1996).

Conclusion: the Cultural Communes of the Information Age

The transformation of our culture and our society would have to happen at a number of levels. If it occurred only in the minds of individuals (as to some degree it already has), it would be powerless. If it came only from the initiative of the state, it would be tyrannical. Personal transformation among large numbers is essential, and it must not only be a transformation of consciousness but must also involve individual action. But individuals need the nurture of groups that carry a moral tradition reinforcing their own aspirations.

Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*[157]

Our intellectual journey through communal landscapes provides some preliminary answers to the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter on the construction of identity in the network society.

For those social actors excluded from or resisting the individualization of identity attached to life in the global networks of power and wealth, cultural communes of religious, national, or territorial foundation seem to provide the main alternative for the construction of meaning in our society. These cultural communes are characterized by three main features. They appear as reactions to prevailing social trends, which are resisted on behalf of autonomous sources of meaning. They are, at their onset, defensive identities that function as refuge and solidarity, to protect against a hostile, outside world. They are culturally constituted; that is, organized around a specific set of values whose meaning and sharing are marked by specific codes of self-identification: the community of believers, the icons of nationalism, the geography of locality.

Ethnicity, while being a fundamental feature of our societies, especially as a source of discrimination and stigma, may not induce communes on its own. Rather, it is likely to be processed by religion, nation, and locality, whose specificity it tends to reinforce.

The constitution of these cultural communes is not arbitrary. It works on raw materials from history, geography, language, and environment. So, they are constructed, but materially constructed, around reactions and projects historically/geographically determined.

Religious fundamentalism, cultural nationalism, territorial communes are, by and large, defensive reactions. Reactions against three fundamental threats, perceived in all societies, by the majority of humankind, in this end of millennium. Reaction against

[157] Bellah et al. (1985: 286).

globalization, which dissolves the autonomy of institutions, organizations, and communication systems where people live. Reaction against networking and flexibility, which blur the boundaries of membership and involvement, individualize social relationships of production, and induce the structural instability of work, space, and time. And reaction against the crisis of the patriarchal family, at the roots of the transformation of mechanisms of security-building, socialization, sexuality, and, therefore, of personality systems. When the world becomes too large to be controlled, social actors aim at shrinking it back to their size and reach. When networks dissolve time and space, people anchor themselves in places, and recall their historic memory. When the patriarchal sustainment of personality breaks down, people affirm the transcendent value of family and community, as God's will.

These defensive reactions become sources of meaning and identity by constructing new cultural codes out of historical materials. Because the new processes of domination to which people react are embedded in information flows, the building of autonomy has to rely on reverse information flows. God, nation, family, and community will provide unbreakable, eternal codes, around which a counter-offensive will be mounted against the culture of real virtuality. Eternal truth cannot be virtualized. It is embodied in us. Thus, against the informationalization of culture, bodies are informationalized. That is, individuals bear their gods in their heart. They do not reason, they believe. They are the bodily manifestation of God's eternal values, and as such, they cannot be dissolved, lost in the whirlwind of information flows and cross-organizational networks. This is why language, and communal images, are so essential to restore communication between the autonomized bodies, escaping the domination of a-historical flows, yet trying to restore new patterns of meaningful communication among the believers.

This form of identity-building revolves essentially around the principle of *resistance identity*, as defined at the beginning of this chapter. *Legitimizing identity* seems to have entered a fundamental crisis because of the fast disintegration of civil society inherited from the industrial era, and because of the fading away of the nation-state, the main source of legitimacy (see chapter 5). Indeed, cultural communes organizing the new resistance emerge as sources of identity by breaking away from civil societies and state institutions from which they originate, as is the case with Islamic fundamentalism breaking away from economic modernization (Iran), and/or from Arab states' nationalism; or with nationalist movements, challenging the nation-state and the state institutions of societies where they come into existence. This negation of civil societies and political institutions

where cultural communes emerge leads to the closing of the boundaries of the commune. In contrast to pluralistic, differentiated civil societies, cultural communes display little internal differentiation. Indeed, their strength, and their ability to provide refuge, solace, certainty, and protection, comes precisely from their communal character, from their collective responsibility, cancelling individual projects. Thus, in the first stage of reaction, the (re)construction of meaning by defensive identities breaks away from the institutions of society, and promises to rebuild from the bottom up, while retrenching themselves in a communal heaven.

It is possible that from such communes, new subjects – that is collective agents of social transformation – may emerge, thus constructing new meaning around *project identity*. Indeed, I would argue that, given the structural crisis of civil society and the nation-state, this may be the main potential source of social change in the network society. As for how and why these new proactive subjects could be formed from these reactive, cultural communes, this will be the core of my analysis of social movements in the network society to be elaborated throughout this volume.

But we can already say something on the basis of the observations and discussions presented in this chapter. The emergence of project identities of different kinds is not a historical necessity. It may well be that cultural resistance will remain enclosed in the boundaries of communes. If this is the case, and where and when this is the case, communalism will close the circle of its latent fundamentalism on its own components, inducing a process that might transform communal heavens into heavenly hells.