



The Mode of Information and the Cultures of the Internet-A Conversation with Mark Poster

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(Professor Mark Poster, intellectual historian, social theorist, poststructuralist philosopher, and critical theorist, is one of the world's leading thinkers on the emerging cultures of information and Internet-based technologies. His numerous books and publications-see bibliography at the end of this article-have received critical acclaim. One morning, not too long ago, I happened to catch him in his office, in the School of Humanities, University of California, Irvine. The rest of the story unfolds below without much editingAlladi Venkatesh).

AV: Let us begin the discussion with *The Mode of information*, your 1990 work, as the starting point. And then, please let us know where you are right now in terms of the whole area of technology and culture, and the way you see the emerging culture of the Internet.

Poster: OK. When I did *The Mode of Information*, I was struck by the mutual relevance of post-structuralist theory and electronic communication systems. It seemed to me that society was being characterized more and more by electronic and media communication. Mostly at the time in the broadcast model. I was writing this in the late 80s, the book came out in 1990. And the computer was only a small part of my thinking at the time. But, it became clear to me that what was happening was that the social appearance of language was changing because of the mediation of technology and that post-structuralist theory was one set of positions that tried to account for and give prominence to language. It seemed to me that it was the one most likely to be helpful in understanding the significance of the changes in what I called at the time, the wrapping of language-the way in which language was being quoted, transmitted-language, as well as in other forms of cultural objects. So I pursued the relationship of post-structuralist theory to these changes in the appearance of language in social space.

AV: How did things change after *The Mode of Information*?

Poster: Very quickly after its publication, the internet began to take on more and more significance for me. It was changing very rapidly at the time

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(as it still is today). In the late 80s, BBSs [the bulletin boards] were the main form of connection between computers and email was perhaps the basic kind of usage for most of us. But then there were of course MOOS and MUDS, all forms of text based (asynchronous and synchronous) online communities which were emerging and becoming more and more important. But also the development in '93 of the web changed the situation and we saw the beginning of the convergence of the different media. (Progressively, we have seen radio, telephone, television and film and now even an internet form of film.) This convergence began to accelerate the significance of the interconnection between computers, the net itself, and its prominence in the technological mediation of communication, the exchange of cultural objects. So that was one factor: the importance of the internet was the big change influencing my work in the years after *The Mode of Information*.

AV: What else did you observe that affected your view of the changing landscape, or, should I say, the cyberscape?

Poster: I also began to recognize that I had dealt with the media in their own terms, I had dealt with databases, TV ads, computer writing and so forth and tried to unpack the mechanisms of what was going on their in relationship to the construction of the subject, the construction of identities. But I hadn't dealt with some of the other questions that were important as well, especially political and social questions. What kinds of groups are involved in these media? How do these kinds of developments and communications intersect with existing institutions like the economy and politics? And how do they intersect with existing identities, ethnic, gender and so forth?

AV: Is this the beginning of your later work, *The Second Media Age*?

Poster: Yes. In *The Second Media Age*, I tried to, on one hand, account for the significance of the internet in the conjuncture of language and post-structuralist theory, as well as its relationship to existing institutions and existing kinds of identities. It seems to me now that *The Second Media Age* is a transitional, a very transitional kind of statement. My work since *The Second Media Age*, in a soon to be published book to be titled *The Cultural Unconscious*, has attempted to come to grips with the internet as a form of social space, as an increasingly pervasive form of social space. Not simply as a communication system but as a part of the world in which communication takes place, and many other things. And I've tried to deal with the internet in relationship to how it reconfigures human ecology in relationship to what had existed before it. It is no longer possible, it seems to me, to think in terms of embodied territorial human subjects in institutional matrices who use electronic communications as part of their life-world. But, instead there's now another world, a virtual world or whatever, a world in which the conditions of daily life are different. The

space and time continuum is different. The relationship of human to machine is fundamentally different from that in RL-real life. This internet now appears to me as a new kind of object in the world.

AV: How have you tried to theorize this line of thinking?

Poster: I've tried to theorize it with the term, "underdetermination." It's a kind of object which has very little specificity to it-although it does have some specificity, some very determinate constraints. But, nonetheless, compared to other objects in the world like chairs, other people, and buildings, it has so little specificity to it that, when one is in its space, it's very difficult to sustain a relationship of subject to object. It's very difficult to connect to it from the standpoint that one is dealing with a stable, separate subject, with something outside one's self as an object. Part of this has to do with the mediation of the machine in that interaction, the very complex network of computing machines and the close symbiosis between the human and the machine in the interaction with the internet. The other part of it has to do with the characteristics of the internet itself. So, I've been working on that as a kind of leading motif, a kind of disturber, or reconfigurer of the situation of communication. And under that rubric, I've been dealing with several different areas and in each case I've been trying to look at the pre-internet, external, RL situation and then how that pre-existing situation changes or might change with the Internet.

And that's a big issue: changes or might change. That's the political question, as this pre-existing institution gets engaged more and more with the internet.

AV: So, how do you deal with this?

Poster: So, for example, I talk about what I call capitalism's linguistic turn, or the subtitle of this chapter in the new book is, "the commodity in the age of its digital reproduction." What happened? As we know, private enterprise has entered the world of the internet in a big way, using its facilities in international trade, in financial services, in financial markets, and also using it as a retail outlet, to give only two instances. But, to the extent that the objects, which are being commodified, are digital objects, they fall under the domain of this underdetermined object, subject to the rule of underdetermination. They take on more and more of the characteristics of this virtual world and they don't fit so easily into the pre-existing rules, norms, ethics of the RL of capitalism. We can see this most dramatically perhaps in the area of popular music in the case of MP3 encoding. Digitized music is copied as it is communicated. And it is copied under the rules of the internet system, which is that the copy leaves the individual with the same objective he or she has beforehand and yet an almost cost-less copy is produced for someone else. This kind of transaction, of the exchange of digitized cultural objects, makes it difficult for the rules of copyright to

obtain and makes it difficult to commodify these kinds of objects. Copyright was developed when producing the copy was an arduous manufacturing process. When the consumer can produce copies as good as the originals for almost no cost, the whole rationale of copyright falls apart. We see that in the actual exchange of commodified cultural objects, consumers have a tendency to violate the existing ethical and legal norms of the commodity and copyright on a pretty systematic basis. There's a recent report in USA Today that worldwide something like 40% of business software is pirated. In the non-business sector that figure must be much higher. This doesn't stop Bill Gates from being a billionaire, but it does indicate that people are now practicing the production of their own cultural objects. And they have the means at their disposal to do so. The music industry is very much aware of this and doesn't seem to have much of a way to respond to it. What's made possible by this underdetermined object of the internet, in the realm of, say, music, or music production and reproduction, is the direct relationship between the artist and the consumer, eliminating the middleman. The basic purpose of the culture industry is put into doubt by this system. If a means is developed whereby a small charge can be made for downloading a music file, it's quite likely that the whole nature of the music industry will be transformed in a very dramatic way. So the pre-existing RL world of the capitalist music commodity entering into the underdetermined object of the internet faces a great deal of disturbance in its ways of behavior and this opens up all kinds of possibilities for the reorganization of the production and exchange of these cultural objects.

AV: As you see it, what is the role of consumer in all this?

Poster: The internet makes possible not only the exchange of preexisting objects, but the continual transformation of these objects by the users or consumers. With appropriate software, it's easy to take a computerized cultural object, translate it into an editing program, change the object, and then publish it one's self as anew object. So, we are faced with the possibility of, in a way, reproducing a pre-industrial form of cultural production and reproduction, that is to say, of folk music, where folk music was performed in a non-commodified form by people for themselves. And each time it was performed, it was changed. It was not written down. Memories changed. New ideas were added. The songs were transformed in use by the user with no commodification whatsoever. This is what becomes possible in the virtual world of the internet. And I think this is a model for what may happen in all areas of digital cultural objects. While the media concentrates on the transfer of the commodity form to the internet, and the gold rush mentality of the stock market in relationship to internet firms continues apace, the underlying structural reality, seems to me, is that we now have as society, as a world, the question of how we want to reorganize the whole domain of cultural objects-whether they should still be commodified, commodified in the same way as in the past or changed and

so forth. That's one example of how the figure of the consumer changes with the Internet.

AV: Is there one another area that comes to your mind?

Poster: Another area is authorship. I try in this case to discuss the contrast between print authors and digital authors. It's very much along the lines of the discussion of the commodity. Except in relation to authorship I've also introduced a chapter that I'm working on, on the theory of the subject. The theory of the subject in relationship to authorship. This has been a controversial topic in the humanities and social sciences. I try to address it in relationship to new media, that is, in relationship to the internet and then draw the conclusions from that theoretical discussion in relationship to authors, authorship. Then I have a discussion of what quality of experience one has in this underdetermined world, that is to say, a discussion of the virtual. I look at some theories of the virtual, those of Baudrillard and Derrida in particular, and then I try to draw conclusions from that in a discussion of ethnicity on the internet. Can there be virtual ethnicity? And here's another example in which I'm taking some pre-existing RL, some social phenomenon, and looking at it in terms of its transformed status in the underdetermined world of the internet. And then I also look at national identity in the same kind of context. I set the issue of national identity in relationship to the nation-state today and to the impact of globalization. And again in the case of politics I discuss the recognized role of print media in relationship to national identity and ask the question, what happens when the media shifts from print to the internet? What happens to national identity? Does it get reorganized in terms of new political configurations? Or perhaps identity at the same time becomes more local and more global than that of national identity.

AV: Can you expand on the political dimensions of the internet?

Poster: Let me address what I call "cyber democracy" and raise the question of the crucial issue of the public sphere which has been theorized as essential to the development of democracy, that is to say, a practice of speech in informal social spaces-not political, institutional regions but places like coffee houses and salons. The informal talk in these public spheres generates a kind of public opinion, a critical public opinion, that's crucial to the development of democratic institutions. So, if that's the case, then I ask what happens to democracy as a political institution, or to representative democracy, once one has the internet as a dominant form of public exchange of ideas? In this essay I question some assumptions in traditional democratic theory about the relationship of democracy and community that derive from the image of the ancient Greek agora, and some assumptions about the face-to-face relationships of human beings as the domain in which public opinion gets generated. And I try to contrast

that with the disembodied, computer mediated, network mediated situation of internet discussions.

And I think that is pretty much the shape of the work that I'm in the process of completing. It will probably take another six months or so to complete it. The book might be called. *The Mode of Information Version 3.0* since it's basic impulses go back to that work. But I'm leaning toward the title of *The Cultural Unconscious: A Critical Theory of Cyberspace*.

AV: When you wrote *The Mode of Information 1.0*, to what extent did you anticipate it-not the specific technological turn of events, but the transformation of the social organizations and the role of language of technology in this transformation process? Were you prepared for this kind of shift . . . ?

Poster: I think I did anticipate some of the developments that emerge in the Internet because I analyze in that book the example, not so much of the internet in the United States, but the Minitel in France, which was an early case of a computer network which was used primarily as a messaging system. It was also a case that illustrates the way the use of technologies cannot be anticipated as the Minitel took off in unexpected directions, unexpected at least to the French Telecom, its creator. French Telecom thought of the Minitel as a technology that would be used for information purposes. Instead it was deployed not so much for railroad schedules or movie schedules, but for communication. It was used primarily to explore mostly anonymous relationships with other people. I was very much fascinated by that and struck by how popular that usage was, and how people, very easily, connected through the Minitel as if they were speaking with real people in face-to-face relations and that they effortlessly transferred their emotional desires, their intellectual interests to discussions with strangers through highly mediated technologies. This was an indication to me that electronic communication would shift to a very basic level of social life and was not simply a vehicle for consuming entertainment, or for the gathering of information by researchers or by citizens interested in certain kinds of questions. Instead computer mediated communication would become a part of people's lives in a very basic way.

AV: So there was some degree of anticipation, or some discussion to that effect?

Poster: Yes.

AV: The question I have here is you have used the terms "language" and the "mode of information" as the operating constructs, if I may say so, of your earlier theory. Are you continuing to debate these issues in your current work?

Poster: Well, I've pretty well switched, in the latest work, to focusing on cultural objects. When I wrote *The Mode of Information*, what wasn't clear to me at all was the extent to which images and sounds would be digitized and networked as much as they have become. Minitel of the 1980s, for example, was a completely text-based system. I was familiar with digital music. CDs had come out in the early 1980s, but it had not occurred to me that all cultural objects would be digitized and put in the same kind of cultural time-space technology. That they would be unified in that way. So I think we need to talk much more now, about cultural objects of all kinds, not simply language. Regarding language, I think that in *The Mode of Information* I tried to generalize it too much in regard to cultural objects. But I still see cultural objects the way the post-structuralists have taught us to look at language, that is to say, in relationship to the way in which subjects are constituted. It's not simply a question of looking at cultural objects in themselves. The important issue is how the configuration of cultural objects ultimately has a lot to do with the kinds of beings we are. This really goes back to Heidegger who are that what we bring forth into the world and how we bring it forth also brings ourselves forth into the world. So there's a double movement going on, in relation to this new technological world of the internet, of producing this internet world, but of producing ourselves in relationship to it at the same time.

AV: Are you still working with the post-structuralist framework?

Poster: I've also been looking at cultural studies work and I've always been not simply post-structuralist, but have been influenced by the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. So I've called the new work, or at least subtitled it "A Critical Theory of Cyberspace." I still take off from and rely upon concerns that were developed through the Frankfurt school as well as those of post-structuralists.

AV: Could you elaborate on this?

Poster: The Frankfurt school-and perhaps this is somewhat ironic was much better than the post-structuralists at confronting the political, their sense of the political domain as a cultural space pervaded by class struggle and other conflicts of groups. I look at the situation of the Internet and the havoc that it is likely to cause with the culture industry as Adorno defined it, and I think in terms of the kinds of possibilities, political possibilities-that are opened up as a result of this kind of shaking up of things. So, I look at this situation from the spirit not only of a cultural critique, which is very well developed in the post-structuralist context, but also in terms of a political critique--of how we need to pay attention to the way the internet is being reorganized and the way in which we have to organize politically around maintaining and developing certain possibilities that might not, indeed will not, automatically be produced, even though

they can be produced, while we adjust to the flow of events as they develop in the area of political relations of force.

AV: It looks like you are touching on the politics of culture, which is probably why critical theory is brought back into it. I also see you're looking at the culture of politics at the site of democracy. Therefore would it be safe to see you are looking at the intersection of these two very interesting dimensions, the politics of culture and the culture of politics?

Poster: Yes. I think that there is a doubling back dialectic of some kind, between the two terms, definitely so.

AV: You called *The Second Media Age* a transitional kind of position. When you were writing it, what did you have in mind? Did you just want to complete the project of "the mode of information?"

Poster: Yes. I saw it that way, as supplemental to *The Mode of Information* and based on the relevant new technology of the web and the internet and also the issues I hadn't dealt with enough in the earlier work: political and social issues.

AV: If the internet had not come into the picture would you just have stopped with *The Second Media Age*? Assumed that the project was complete? What was the frame of mind when you were doing this? Where were you in your own thinking in terms of this?

Poster: My thinking was that I had developed a way of understanding something that had actually come into being. I thought the perspective I had developed was good enough and that I could just apply it to the internet. At that time, I didn't think that new categories like the underdetermination and so forth were necessary.

AV: Can you explain a little bit what the term "under-determination" means in your work? Does it have some historical, philosophical basis?

Poster: Oh yes, it does. It's a term that's oriented to the Freudian category of over-determination that had been transported by Althusser into the domain of political and social theory. I have a piece coming out-it's part of the inaugural issue of an important new journal called *New Media and Society*-called "Underdetermination." It occurred to me that our method of analysis was based upon a piling up of levels of analysis, as an over-determination, a piling up in the sense of the multi-layeredness, or multi-determinedness of objects. And I also regarded this overdetermination as a way of complicating the Cartesian world of a clear division of subjects and objects, hence that objects took on a kind of dynamism in Freud and Althusser. But, with this understanding we are still

within the category of overdetermination, within the general Cartesian metaphysic, and within the epistemology of subjects and objects separate from one another, however much more complicated their interaction might be. By contrast, the coupling of the human to the network, the machinednetwork, and the specific nature of the states in the network seemed to me to suggest real breaks from those Cartesian assumptions.

AV: Are we now beginning to anticipate a closure on the Cartesian world because of these new developments? Are we closer to identifying a new kind of a subject? I see some hints of that in your work.

Poster: I think that what is happening is that a new level is being folded into the older levels, causing all kinds of reconfigurations, but also that there still remain the previous levels, maybe in somewhat newer forms. Yet there is persistence of the old that must be accounted for. In other words, even after the hypertext and internet kinds of textuality, the book will remain part of our cultural world, and so I think that operating in labor organizations, industrial organizations, requires a Cartesian subject position, that of the agent or author or "autonomous individual." There maybe segments, in other words, of life in which we are Cartesian subjects and segments in which we are different kinds of subjects. When we've lovers, for example, we're not in the best cases Cartesian subjects.

AV: You used the term disembodied a few times in describing the internet. I was wondering . . . ?

Poster: I admit that disembodied is a bad term.

AV: Re-embodied?

Poster: I would say what I'm trying to get at is a differentially embodied or disjunctively embodied subject. The body is still there. The pain in our wrists and our necks from working at the computer are certainly signs enough to remind us that the body is still there. But in cyberspace the body is there in a different kind of way than it is in territorial life. So disembodied is a bad term. It's a Cartesian term.

AV: So you'll probably come up with . . .

Poster: Yes, we need another word or phrase, maybe somebody's already developed one, we need to look around. Perhaps virtual body or cyborg will do.

AV: That reminds me of the work of Sandy Stone and Sherry Turkle who have also theorized in this area. Do you see some common themes or connections with their work?

Poster: Well, there are definitely connections between my work and theirs. I would also mention Katherine Hayles' work and I'm sure many other writers as well. We are talking about a group who are developing a discourse to understand the new subject positions in internet space, cyberspace, without a defensive posture, and at the same time without a purely celebratory posture. We're trying to look seriously at the possibilities of reconfiguration that this new cultural space offers or may offer, and we do so with a sense of losses as well as gains with regard to previous subject positions. Yes, I've been influenced by the writers in this group, and perhaps it is not too presumptuous to think that they've been influenced by me. Stone, Hayles and Turkle are part of the community of people who I read and talk to, who I am in dialog with.

AV: You talked about the crisis of authorship, a much discussed topic particularly in the humanities. If the consumer or the reader is able to appropriate this new media, and shape it to his/her liking or preferences, what is the contribution of the author now? What should the author be envisioning for him/herself in this process?

Poster: I enter into the discussion of the author by a review and critique of Foucault's notion from his essay, "What is an author?" and with particular attention to his notion of the author function. He provides us I think with a lead that gets us out of the humanist framework where we think of the author by an ideological view of copyright and the author's relation to it, and by celebrating the author as the genius who puts into the work all possible meanings the reader may get out of it. That's clearly inadequate. At the same time, the structuralist rejection of the humanist author as a point of intelligible is also inadequate because this would prevent us from studying and understanding the role that the author has indeed played in modern culture. Foucault tries to create a model for understanding how this author-figure of Western culture was constructed, maintained and developed. His model also attempts to grasp how this construction was connected starting in the 17th century with the many different levels of political, economic, social and cultural formations. He also speculates about how the author function might end-how we might be able to engage with cultural objects without reference to an author. And I think the internet makes possible a new kind of cultural practice, which involves the continuous reconfiguration of texts, so that every reader becomes an author. Although this was anticipated in some literary theory and some idealistic way in literary criticism, I'm talking about the material not imaginary transformation of the objects by readers, and the passing on and disseminating of those transformed objects. At present this is not a widespread practice on the internet but it is clearly a possibility of the technology. I think some people are beginning to explore this. The new model of "nonauthorship" is being explored more in the world of digital and even nondigital art. There are artists who have taken photographs and

framed them, presenting in a new way an exact copy of the earlier photograph. These artists claim the new work as their own work in a parody of the artwork as a product of individual genius. They've done this precisely to put into question the notion of authorship and the way in which the author figure reigns over and constrains our cultural experience. So there are examples of putting the author into question outside of the internet, from the art world itself. This tendency moves in a direction of art as a continuous transformation, artistic experience as continuous exchange and transformation. They suggest an art without the fetish of an author function. What would become important in such a world, were it to develop more extensively on the Internet, would be the editor function. The editor function would become much more important than it is now because the problem of finding objects one wants to engage with would become much more difficult. So search engines are early forms of this new editor function. Intelligent agents and bots, are examples of mechanisms or computer programs that serve this kind of function. I think the time will come when people will talk admiringly of the great searches of certain individuals the way that we talk today about the great texts of Shakespeare.

AV: You have dealt with music in great length, the musical forms and the appropriate music, appropriation of the music by consumers and so on. Is this limited to or does it extend to other artistic endeavors?

Poster: I think it will happen in other domains as well. I think what's peculiar about music is that it's primarily people between the ages of 14 and 24 who buy commodified music. And these are precisely the people who tend to use the internet more. And these are people who tend not to have much money, much disposable income. For us, it's just as easy to go out and buy a CD or use Amazon.com to buy it as it is to download it. But not so for younger people. So, I think it's the younger people who have been experimenting with pirating music and the domain of music is impacted in a greater way perhaps than other cultural areas. But I think that the same result is possible in relation to books, certainly with some more inconveniences compared to the advantage of the book form in relation to books on computers or even to the new technology of computer book. You know, those computer books have been put on the market. They look like books but are actually computers. They are portable like paper books but one may download new texts into them, make annotations to them, in short, treat them like paper books. In relation to films, the question of bandwidth is the constraint at the present time, in terms of distributing films with the same facility with which one can download musical selections. And so these are some reasons perhaps why music has been the first cultural form to be affected by the Internet.

AV: I was wondering, perhaps, the University settings. Students compiling notes and writing essays and articles and so on because of this editing function which the internet creates. This is already occurring to some extent. (*Poster*: Plagiarism among students?) Plagiarism in the older sense. But if you take music as an example, people are not calling they're not calling it plagiarism. They're calling it some form of consumer initiative. But if you do it in some other areas they call it infringing of the copyright and so on. So this is more judgmental than the case of radios.

Poster: Well, with regard to the university and the high schools, I think there are two issues to consider. First there is the reproduction technology of the Internet in which copying of papers is facilitated. But there is also the fact that, as I'm finding increasingly, students who don't want to write a paper at all. They don't even want to copy a paper, but instead want to make a home page or a hypertext. They want to make a web page as a paper or do their work in the mode of a web page. And this is a very different kind of a logic from that of a discursive paper. It's a logic of linking things, of pulling things in from elsewhere, a kind of arranging things in interesting ways. They want to do projects on the Web that have written links between them objects or passages written connecting associated links, rather than writing a systematic discourse or a rhetorically effective piece of prose. So, I think there'll be more and more of an impetus from the students placed on their professors to do multi-media, home page kinds of exercises, ones that take advantage of the internet in the students' intellectual work.

AV: What they're demonstrating is that they're capable of locating sources that they need. To recognize their ability to . . .

Poster: To find it and to select the right one. And to make the right juxtapositions. It becomes a different set of skills

AV: And this goes to your editorship concept. A good editor knows how to identify different sources on his/her home page. That's interesting.

Poster: And how to use different media to raise questions, or to respond to questions if it's a matter for example of the theory of freedom, or the concept of a democracy-to be able to use images and sounds as well as text, to address those questions.

AV: One last question. Because the Internet is such a global phenomenon, does this global perspective fit into your thinking as well?

Poster: Yes. I didn't talk about that. This is really important. The Internet is so fundamentally global, because it is a global system of communication notwithstanding the dominance of English and then a differential dissemination of it. It is so basically a global communication system as

compared with broadcast kinds of media and even postal systems, that it really does raise a question about global identities, global practices, and the beginning of a new form of cosmopolitanism in the real world, not one like that among cultivated individuals who have a chance to travel, but one with a sense of people having immediately to think of themselves as in a world with others, living on a planet with others as opposed to being in the first instance members of a nation, or members of a city or region or ethnic group. This is just the beginning. I think it's a very helpful kind of possibility. It has to do with redefining citizenship. We have on our campus Etienne Balibar who's been doing a lot of thinking about that. It has to do with the question: can we be global citizens? Can we participate through our practice of communicating on a worldwide basis? Can we develop a sense of participation and citizenship on a global basis. And what kind of political dimensions would that sort of thing take on. In the end its an issue of this: can human beings have in a practical sense a identities as earthlings rather than as Americans or Chinese. Yes, I think that's essential to the new project I'm working on. Definitely.

AV: Are there any new political philosophies that inform such discussion?

Poster: There are discussions now of rethinking issues of universalism and cosmopolitanism and citizenship which were categories developed recently in the West. These categories were always tainted and flawed by their Western origins and the limited standpoints from which they originated. So the question now is, to rethink these in a world where there are multiple points of entry into the conversation. Where it's not just the Western world anymore, where there's a systems communication, this internet, which has people hooked up in Brazil, in India, in Asia,-all over the world-people who can make statements, who can speak to the issue, who can engage with the issues on an equal footing. So the Internet presents the possibility of developing a kind of multi-centered cosmopolitanism that is a much more satisfying possibility than re-perfecting the concept of the cosmopolitan, of the universal in Kant or something like that.

AV: The global street of United Nations

Poster: Well, I think we really now have a chance to think about a union of peoples. It's not just a result of political machinations of leaders but a possibility based on practices of ordinary people in various walks of life.

AV: Thank you, for inaugurating our series, *Conversations*.

Poster: Thank you for the opportunity.

MARK POSTER-- PUBLICATIONS

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