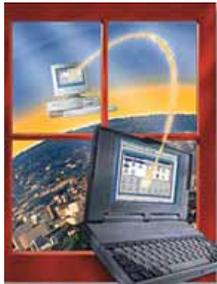


# Sociological Meanings of CMC Spaces



Dec.14, 2005

YOSHIDA, Jun  
Kyoto University



## 1. Theories of CMC-spaces



- Significance
  - Today, problems over CMC-spaces are at the center of theories of the information society.
  - CMC-space is especially typically regarded as consequences of the radicalization of modernity.
- Three Typical Theories of CMC-Space
  1. Theories of Discontinuity
  2. Theories of Continuity
  3. Theories of Reflexivity

2

### (1) Theories of Discontinuity



- Typical in early CMC studies (in 1980's)
- Negative evaluation to CMC-space, compared with FTF (face-to-face)-space
  - Because of visual anonymity and lack of social cues (gestures, expressions, tone of voices...), CMC inevitably becomes communication without social, emotional and personal dimensions.



3

### (1') Postmodernist CMC Theory

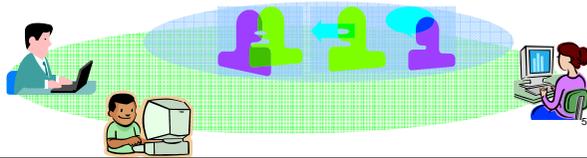


- A variation of discontinuity theories
- Turns over the negative evaluation of CMC to the positive.
- Anonymity of CMC-Space enables 'equality in participation', 'de-centralization of power' and 'direct democracy'. (Mark Poster)

4

## (2) Theories of Continuity

- Typical in CMC studies after 1990's
- Positive evaluation of CMC-space, as social space continued to real (FTF) space
  - Participants in CMC-space overcome the 'lack of social cues' by using it creatively, thus 'virtual communities' with personal relations are constructed.



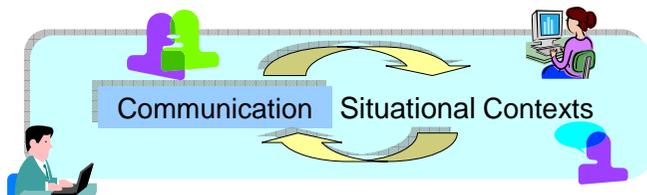
## (2') Modernism CMC Theory

- A variation of continuity theories
- Philosophical background of modernism, represented by J.Habermas
- Construction of new public spheres in CMC-spaces are expected.



## (3) Theories of Reflexivity

- Conceive the characteristic of CMC-space itself by the concept of 'reflexivity'
  - Reflexivity means that CMC cannot depend on existing 'situational contexts', and must construct them by communication for itself.



## Sociological implications of theories of reflexivity

- Reflexivity does not mean discontinuity with 'real' (FTF-)space.
- Rather, both spaces are continuous, for 'real' (FTF-)space is in fact reflexively constructed, too.
- Both spaces penetrate each other, and construct their situational contexts reflexively.

## 2. Informatization as Modernization: Anthony Giddens' Theory of Modernity

- Giddens' theory of modernity seems to suggest that there are inherent relations between informatization and modernization.
- In other words, modernization necessarily includes informatization (though Giddens himself does not explain explicitly).



9

## Three dominant sources of the dynamism of modernity

1. The separation of time and space
2. The development of dis-embedding mechanisms
  - “Lifting out” of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space.
3. Reflexivity:  
the reflexive appropriation of knowledge

(Giddens 1990: 53)

10

## 2'. Re-embedding: complement of dis-embedding

- The re-appropriation or recasting of disembedded social relations so as to pin them down ... to local conditions of time and space

(Giddens 1990: 64)

- Facework [face-to-face] commitments are generally important as a mode of generating continuing trustworthiness [in abstract systems]
  - E.g. Meeting of businessmen, academic conference of scholars...

(Giddens 1990: 87)

11

## 3. Reflexivity

- All human beings routinely “keep in touch” with the grounds of what they do as an integral element of doing it. (“reflexive monitoring of action”)
  - This is not specifically connected with modernity, but...
- With the advent of modernity, reflexivity is introduced into the very basis of system reproduction.
  - The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character.

(Giddens 1990: 36-38)

12

## Informatization as Modernization



- Informatization (including vector to post-modernity) is seen as consequence of radical modernization in such meaning, or 'three dominant sources' of modernity.
- CMC Spaces is emerging as typical social spaces, which intensively represents informatization, and so, radicalization of modernity.

13

## Relations between Theories of CMC-Space and Modernity



Theories of Discontinuity	Separation of time and space, Dis-embedding
Theories of Continuity	Re-embedding
Theories of Reflexivity	Reflexivity

14

## References



- Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Polity Press, 1990
- Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context*, Polity Press, 1990
- Other Japanese Articles.

15