

63. Donna, 30, clerical officer (KE3).
64. Tracey, 37, solicitor (KE4).
65. Bourdieu, 1984, p. 4.
66. Tim, 22, administrative assistant, and Joanne, 25, human resources administrator (KE5).
67. Jennie, 32, student (KE7).
68. Tim, 22, administrative assistant (KE5).
69. NEP, 4 December 1999.
70. Brian, 46, probation officer (KE16).
71. Sharan, 33, nurse/tutor (KE35).
72. Celia, 62, retired cleaner (KE6).
73. Melanie, 34, information officer (RM7).
74. Louise, 34, administrator (RM8).
75. Stallybrass and White, 1986.
76. Williams, 1991, pp. 2-13.
77. Marc, 25, student (KE15).
78. Marc, 25, student (KE15).
79. Stefan, 25, unemployed teacher (KE19).
80. Jo, 22, receptionist (KE1); National Council of Women, Nottingham Branch (KE36).
81. Catherine, 25, student (RMQ).
82. Stefan, 25, unemployed teacher (KE19).

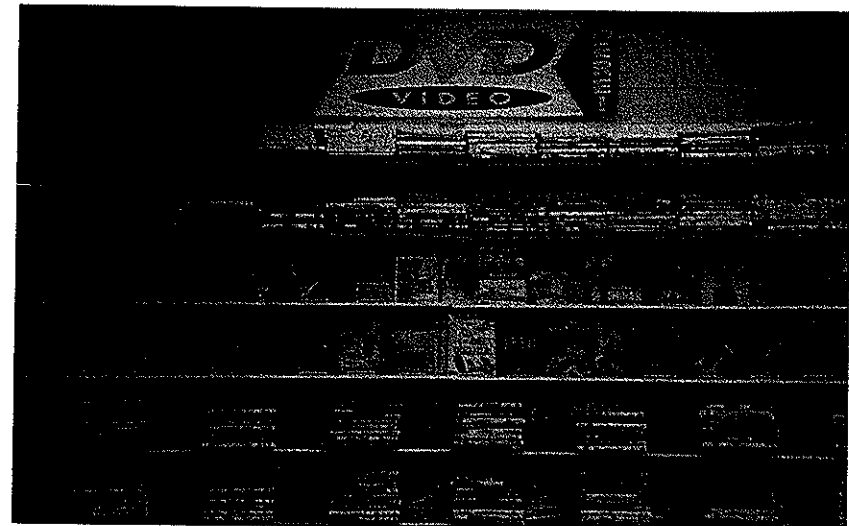
15

Media Revolutions: Futurology, Film Content and the New Media

New Media and Old Predictions

As we have seen, both the emergence of television and video were seen as threats to film consumption in general and the cinema in particular, confining people within domestic space and rendering entertainment outside the home redundant. However, in both cases, these predictions were never fulfilled. Television has actually made more films available for consumption than ever before and the number of films shown in one week on terrestrial television alone is roughly equivalent to the maximum number of screens in operation in inter-war Nottingham. Similarly, video not only failed to kill off the cinema, but may even have encouraged a renaissance in cinemagoing and cinema building.¹

However, since the advent of video, a whole series of new media has emerged that are again considered a threat to both the cinema and the city cultures on which it is based. The first of these were, of course, cable and satellite which became the object of intense political and economic investment during the late 1980s. Of the two, cable



DVD is allied with a whole series of technologies that are often referred to as 'home cinema'.
DVD display, Hollywood Video

offered the most opportunities due to its potential for other telecommunications-related media such as the internet. However, while satellite systems could be accessed by anyone with a dish and decoder, cable required a whole new infrastructure that made its development slow, at least until cable companies were given the right to offer telecommunications packages in 1990. These technologies have also been augmented by the introduction of pay-per-view and digital television. Both promise to expand massively the range of programming channels available to the British public and provide audiences with a greater ability to determine when to watch programmes and particularly films.

In addition to these developments, a whole series of new consumer items has been introduced onto the British market that often identify themselves as, or with, 'home cinema'. These items are associated with new information technologies. The first is the laserdisc which never became much more than a gadget for the connoisseur. More recently this has been superseded by DVD which has begun to take off in a far more convincing manner. Unlike laserdisc, it is allied with a whole new series of items, such as widescreen televisions with refined image and sound qualities, and this alliance of technologies is often referred to as 'home cinema' on the assumption that it has overcome the poor visual and aural experience of television, and has achieved a sense of visual and aural spectacle that replicates that of the cinema.

Finally, all these developments are supposed to be in a process of convergence. Soon, it is claimed, different technologies will merge into one complex, interconnected information system through which we can communicate with others, receive our entertainment and regulate our domestic environment. This technology will therefore liberate us in a number of ways. Not only will communications overcome problems of distance, they will also free us from time constraints, or at least allow us to control our own time. In this situation, people will no longer be dictated to by the schedules of broadcasters but they will be able to download programmes via the internet from a virtually endless archive and watch them anywhere in the world.

These fantasies have been widely diffused throughout society over the last few years and thus we found many respondents who believed that DVD would replace video² or that pay per view would render the video redundant.³ Others claimed that we will soon be able to watch films via the internet on our computers, or that DVD would eventually allow greater interactivity so that films would become more like computer games. However, it is interesting that these technologies were seen as a threat to video rather than the cinema. Indeed, the respondent with probably the greatest investment in these new technologies saw no threat to the cinema because, he claimed, it was already an interactive mode of entertainment. Here, the meaning of interactivity shifted from one that was primarily concerned with the manipulation of on-screen action to one that stressed the pleasure of 'going out' and watching films with an audience.⁴

Another series of claims is that these technologies will create greater diversity, choice, freedom and hence control. These claims were clearly in evidence among our respondents who often seemed highly enthusiastic about the potential for choice. However, as we have argued in previous chapters in Part Five, choice is not always viewed as a positive thing. Not only were there concerns that the choice would not be a 'real' one, but

also that the choice already available was creating a sense of 'overload' in which some consumers simply felt swamped by the range available.⁵ As a result, despite the more positive images of the new media, there is concern that they will lead to an increasingly individualised viewer who watches these media in a state of increasing isolation. The figure of the computer geek is probably one of the most powerful images to be produced by this type of anxiety, but these concerns can also be seen in the NEP's claim that 'all this technology could encourage couch potatoes to take root in their armchairs and never venture outside their front doors'.⁶ In addition to concerns with spatial isolation, many respondents also felt that people will have their own individualised schedules so that any sense of simultaneity and imagined community will be lost.

These predictions also relate to a series of claims about the spatial effects of these new technologies in which social relations are seen to be increasingly disconnected from issues of place: 'Where we are no longer determines who we are – or who we are "with" – to the same degree as it used to because electronically mediated communication has the potential to transform situation, interaction and identification.'⁷ In the process, it is claimed, identities are not only less dependent on place but also social relations are less dependent on proximity. As people increasingly communicate via the new media, they no longer need to leave their own homes for goods, entertainment and, perhaps least convincing of all, work. As a result, it is argued that public spaces of interaction become increasingly redundant. For some, this is a utopian image that promises the end of nightmarish cityscapes and a return to a high-tech pastoral society in which the population can return to nature to enjoy the benefits of rural living without giving up the advantages of modern industrial society. For others, however, it is a nightmare of social isolation in which city centres decay and people become increasingly atomised and prey to centres of power, a situation that will spell the final death of cinema.⁸

In other words, the new media figure as both agents of centralisation and decentralisation, and produce either a massive concentration of power or its diffusion. For Nicholas Garnham, for example, these new media are implicated in a process that not only threatens the values of public service broadcasting but the possibility of a healthy public sphere. For Garnham, information is not only increasingly organised as a commodity but we are witnessing an increasingly widening gap between the information rich and the information poor.

It is therefore important to remember, in the face of all the hype about these new media, that many people simply cannot afford them, and that access to electronically mediated communication is still determined by economic considerations.⁹ However, while our respondents often used cost to explain why they did not subscribe to cable or satellite programming,¹⁰ other processes were also going on here. While one person claimed that she did not have cable or satellite because she resented paying for them on top of her licence fee,¹¹ in this case, the remark may also have represented another dynamic altogether. Historically, the take-up of cable and satellite has been precisely among the poorer sections of the population who are most dependent on the television for their entertainment and, as a result, it has acquired the image of a lower-class entertainment.¹² As a result, many people's disdain for it had a class basis, and their refusal to subscribe was because their affluence made them less reliant on television as a mode of entertainment.¹³

Content is King: The Centrality of Film in the Age of New Media

Film presentations have so far been central to the development of these new media and the likelihood is that this situation will intensify rather than decline. The proliferation of media, formats and channels creates a central problem of content. Many of the new media are 'carriage'-centred operations that do not make programmes but are simply concerned with the processes of their dissemination. They therefore depend on others to provide the content that will justify their use by customers. However, even those media that are both carriers and producers face a problem given the sheer amount of scheduling time that needs to be filled. This situation has led to a heavy emphasis on the recycling of material in which media archives become extremely valuable. In this context, film has become central, and all of the major global players have heavily invested in this area, buying studios that will not only ensure their access to top films, but also to their huge back catalogues. It was for this reason that Ted Turner bought the MGM film library, although, in more recent years, media conglomerates have obtained whole studios. For example, the satellite broadcaster Sky is owned by Murdoch who also owns 20th Century-Fox, while Sumner Redstone's empire owns Paramount.

Film is also useful to these empires because it offers a form of programming that can be distinguished from the banality of 'television' more generally. As Crisell points out, while in the past 'the business of being entertained or culturally edified has been more or less separate from the banalities of existence', domestic entertainment is increasingly seen as 'banal'. As we have seen, families often sought to make television viewing a special event in its early days, but as it has become 'more closely [assimilated] than ever before to the daily routines of the individual', television viewing has become less and less special.¹⁴ As a result, even the terrestrial channels such as Channel 4 and the BBC have started to become film producers, if only to present particular programmes as events rather than simply regular parts of the schedule.

In other words, the presence of films is used to distinguish cable and satellite from 'normal' television, and as somehow closer to the experience of cinemagoing, while still retaining the appeals of domestic entertainment. Thus while people discussed the pleasures of cable and satellite in similar terms to terrestrial television, they did distinguish them as somehow more special. Many people commented on the lack of adverts, while others liked to make an occasion of watching films on Sky, opening a bottle of wine to mark it as an event or an indulgence.¹⁵ As a result, one respondent claimed that he regarded satellite as existing in some place that is halfway between video and television, in which video is seen as something special and television as something far more banal.¹⁶ Another respondent said that she had access to satellite for the films, rather than for the sport or what she saw as the 1970s' television series that were such an important part of its programming.¹⁷ Yet another claimed that she thought that television was trash and, as a result, that she wanted to get FilmFour.¹⁸

These issues are also clearly central to the strategies of the cable and satellite companies that not only heavily use the film channels to promote the attractions of their products but also charge a significantly higher rate for them. While the basic packages are largely made up of standard television programming, it is the film and sports chan-

nels that are defined as 'premium' channels for which the highest rates can be charged. Many of the other channels are simply presented as fillers that are used to create a sense of diversity and choice.

However, the responses above are also interesting in another way. All three of the respondents referred to above were middle class and had a relatively high level of identification with legitimate culture. It is therefore interesting that it is these respondents who still made special mention of cable and satellite channels as distinct from terrestrial television. As we have seen, the early take-up of these media was initially among the poorer sections of the population and, by the time of our study, these sections of the population did not feel the need to identify these media as distinct from their normal television viewing. However, these three middle-class respondents clearly saw their identification with satellite as distinguishing them from the 'normal' television viewer. As a result, we may be witnessing a change in the image of these media as they seek to become more legitimate in the hope of attracting those sections of the middle classes that had previously shunned them. The mention of FilmFour is therefore particularly significant in this regard: it is a film channel that distinguishes itself from the other film channels on cable and satellite through its association with the independent and the art cinema, rather than the products of the Hollywood majors.

Convergence or Contrast: the Relational Meanings of Media Forms

If it is unlikely that these new media will destroy film consumption, it is equally unlikely, as Garnham has demonstrated, that these technologies and accessories will merge into one integrated media form. There are two main reasons for this. First, the economic logic that leads hardware manufacturers to develop new technologies that can augment the television or computer would actually work against the development of a single, integrated consumer good. These technologies were specifically developed and introduced as the markets in television sets became 'saturated, so that manufacturers in the consumer electronics sector [were] in search of new products and new markets'.¹⁹ The development of one integrated consumer item would work against the current logic of the market which would not only quickly become saturated, but would also hinder the development and introduction of new accessories and peripherals.

Second, if there is an economic pressure to maintain a diverse range of accessories that cluster around the television and/or computer, there is also a pressure from within the processes of consumption. As we have seen before, while there is a 'tendency for one medium to partially supplant another, that is cinema to replace music-hall and TV to replace cinema, newspaper circulation declining in the face of TV',²⁰ it is important to stress the 'partial' nature of this process. Certainly some media do go into terminal decline but, as we have argued above, it is more often the case that the meaning of an earlier technology is redefined through the introduction of the newer one. Partly this is through a process in which its cultural status changes. As one medium loses its audience to a new medium, the cost of access to it inevitably rises; as the cost of access rises, the old medium finds it increasingly difficult to compete with new media; and as the audience becomes more select and the taste for that medium becomes increasingly rare,

it becomes more likely that middle-class audiences will appropriate this older medium. In other words, middle-class audiences can use it to signal their distance from contemporary popular media by presenting the declining medium as the emblem of a dying mode of authenticity that is posed against the barbarism of contemporary popular forms.

As a result, while the introduction of new media may change the meaning of earlier media they are not likely to replace them, but rather to change their status and function within the repertoire of available leisure activities. Just as television associated cinemas with tradition and nostalgia, so the emergence of satellite altered the meanings of television. Suddenly there were campaigns to protect the quality of television from the threat of 'wall-to-wall Dallas',²¹ and the NEP ran a feature on the 'screen debate'. British television, it was claimed, had 'long [been] regarded as the best in the world' but was now 'in for a period of upheaval'. It therefore presented two sets of contradictory responses to the impact of satellite programming under the headings: 'quality is under serious threat' and 'exciting "classic" days to come'. The former largely recounted anecdotes about a golden age of television production, while the latter largely concentrated on the movie packages on offer via satellite: 'BSB promises strong programming and – the jewel in their crown – the best movie catalogue of any television company after deals with the top six Hollywood studios netted them films like *Rain Man* and *Twins*.' BSB are also quoted as claiming that they 'hope we'll be able to make movies when we get richer but we already have quite a substantial investment in British films such as *The Rachel Papers*'.²²

Furthermore, as we have seen, while many people claim to prefer television to the cinema because they can watch films in the comfort of their own homes, this preference is only a general one. Many still have a firm commitment to going out, even if only every now and then. Indeed, as Crisell suggests, it may be possible that the very ubiquitous nature of television as a medium is actually creating a renewed interest in 'going out':

The increasing subjugation of broadcasting to the individual lifestyles of its audience in one sense devalues the culture and entertainment that it offers. We often speak of television not so much as a source of entertainment in itself but as a poor alternative to 'real' entertainment ('I think I'll just stay in and watch telly tonight') ...²³

In other words, different media not only have different meanings but they do so because they offer different types of experience. While a new media may become dominant, it does not follow that it will render the experiences offered by other media undesirable.

New media, for example, may offer greater interactivity but, as we have seen before, while some may value interactivity, they do not necessarily value it all the time, and still others may view interactivity as distinctly undesirable. Some people clearly relished the pleasures of being unable to control the film and the thrill of being assaulted by its visual and aural spectacle. Similarly, while some people might like the interactivity that computer games embody, the pleasure of narrative films is often the inability to control their development, the surrender to their shocks, surprises, twists and reversals: the inability

to predict what will come next and even the pleasure in seeing the familiar executed with a sense of perfect craftsmanship. Certainly one could choose to tell one's own stories and make one's own films but, for many, the pleasure of narrative is specifically in surrendering that role to someone else.

Some of these processes can be seen, for example, through the impact of 'home cinema' on the meanings of cinema and cinemagoing. These technologies claim to replicate the 'cinema experience', but this defines the 'cinema experience' in very specific ways. Rather than either a social activity or one that is crucially bound up with 'getting out', the cinema experience is defined simply in terms of the supposed superiority of its visual and aural spectacle when compared with that of television. This is made clear in an NEP article on 'home cinema', which begins:

Finding a parking space ... queuing for tickets ... sitting behind a woman with big hair ... these are the annoying little hazards of going to the pictures. It's the film you want to see, not snogging teenagers in front of you. And don't arrive too late – or you'll end up in the first row, peering straight up Bruce Willis's nose.

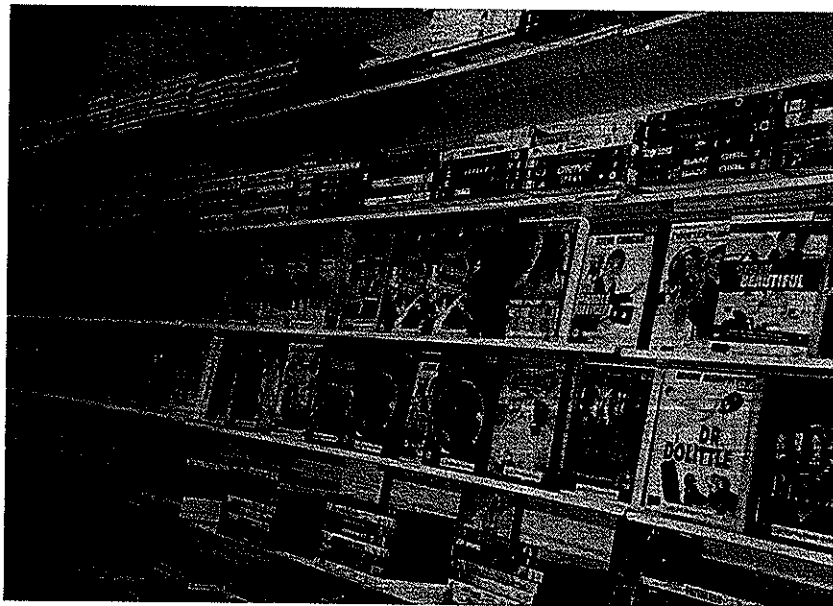
The article does however acknowledge that, for some people, 'the magic of cinema includes all of the above – along with rustling sweet packets and people hissing "ssssh-hhh!" every 15 minutes'. However, such a preference is seen as fairly ludicrous in comparison to those who 'want to watch a movie in peace, with no distractions – and maybe a beer and a sandwich – at home, in fact'.²⁴



Cinema is no longer associated solely with 'going out' but is now seen as something that can be recreated within the domestic sphere. The Cinema Store, the Cornerhouse

Ironically, this article appeared in exactly the same edition as an article on the closure of the Odeon, an article that presents this event as a major loss to the culture and heritage of the city. While the article on home cinema claims that it is 'the film you want to see', the article on the Odeon stresses that the venue was about much more than the viewing of films. Most of the people who wrote letters to the paper to lament the closure of the Odeon identified themselves with the dating couples who frequent cinemas, rather than those whose view was blocked by the sight of 'snogging teenagers'.

Indeed adverts for 'home cinema' usually depict a solitary individual watching and listening within an enclosed private space that is frequently distinguished from that of a family living room and identified as a bachelor's flat. There are, of course, sound reasons for this given the demographic at which this technology was originally directed: young single men with disposable income who may or may not live at home but have not yet settled down with a family. In other words, 'home cinema' simply promises to reproduce the quality of sound and image, and it is therefore as much defined *against* traditional television technology as through an identification *with* cinema. It is therefore interesting that not only was the NEP article on home cinema in the property section, rather than either the film or entertainment sections, but it was preoccupied with the technology that one consumer had installed in his home and provided consumer advice on what to think about if one was planning to install one's own home-cinema system. Thus, it is claimed that:



When 'home cinema' claims to replicate the 'cinema experience', this 'experience' is defined in very specific ways. DVD display, Hollywood Video

Mike contacted Castle Sound and Vision in Maid Marion Way, Nottingham, and they put together a package including DVD, Sky Digital, video and computer with internet access and remote keyboard and mouse (for business presentations). The system can also play music and, oh yes, there's a karaoke machine ... The room also has remote controlled blackout blinds and the screen is nine-foot wide, that's 124 inches diagonally ... 'The best thing about it is that there is one remote control for everything,' says Jeff Allen, of Castle Sound and Vision.²⁵

However, while this passage places the stress on gadgetry, the article also stresses the importance of scale and quality. The article is not only called 'Seeing the Bigger Picture', but it claims that 'for some people, size is important'.

It therefore makes special mention of 'the top of the range Seleo home cinema projector' that 'produces stunning picture quality', and 'the front speakers and subwoofers (low bass)', which are supposed to produce equally stunning sound quality. The article also goes on to note that 'Mike is obviously thrilled with his home cinema' and he is quoted as saying, 'The quality of the old video was never good enough to put on the big screen ... But now with DVD, you get excellent quality which looks fantastic on the big screen.'²⁶ Home cinema is therefore valued not for the social experience it offers but rather for its ability to technologically replicate sound and image quality, and it is often suggested that the experience of viewing and listening is indistinguishable from that of 'being there'. In this way, it is implied that this technology will not only replicate the experience of 'getting out of the house' but therefore render such action unnecessary. As a result, while the adverts for computer games emphasise the pleasures of interactivity with the game, those for home cinema often present the experience of viewing as a literal assault. One image, for example, depicts the viewer being literally 'blown away' by the image and sound, while yet another drops the viewer into the action of the image where he is reduced to a victim that is pursued and shot at. Far from being in a position of control over, or even interactivity with, the world of the film, he is made into an object that is assaulted by it.

However, despite the claim that home cinema can replicate the cinema experience, as we have seen, the respondent who had the greatest identification with the new media specifically stated that, for him, even widescreen television could not reproduce the cinema experience of watching films with an audience.²⁷ The introduction of 'home cinema' has therefore had less impact on the meaning of cinema, for this respondent, than on the meaning of television. Indeed, with the introduction of home cinema, computer games and the internet, the television has come to be seen by many as neither technological enough (and therefore inferior to the cinema) nor interactive enough (and therefore inferior to computer technologies).

Local Receptions: Identity, Place and the New Media

Despite the frequent claims that new media are disrupting traditional social relations and identities, whether positively or negatively, their meanings and uses are also defined within existing arrangements. As Shaun Moores has pointed out, the meanings of cable

and satellite have been shaped by tensions within families in which younger members of the family have identified with the modernity that they represent, while, for others, the meanings of these media are shaped by their identifications or disidentifications with America or Europe.²⁸ This was also the case in our study. The young had a sense of ownership of both the new media and the future that they represented, and their identification with them provided them with a position from which they could produce a sense of identity and authority that their parents could not challenge.²⁹ We also found that while some identified with the American programming of Sky, and saw it as a democratic alternative to the conservatism of British culture, others were clearly opposed to it and saw its Americanness as representing a form of cultural imperialism that threatened to replace a distinctive British culture with a homogeneous mass culture.³⁰

Consequently, these new technologies have often been associated with the destruction of local identities, even though some present this process positively: 'Where we are no longer determines who we are – or who we are "with" – to the same degree as it used to because electronically mediated communication has the potential to transform situation, interaction and identification.'³¹ However, these new technologies have also relied on, or even encouraged, local identities rather than destroying them. For example, while Diamond Cable used its movie channels to promote itself, it also claimed to enhance a sense of locality and community. From the first, Diamond Cable promised 'three channels for community television', one of which would be 'available for use by local authorities and other organisations within the community'.³² Indeed, this notion of locality was distinguished from 'existing TV companies and the BBC' which, it was claimed, 'did not operate at a lower than regional level' so that there was 'a vacancy for truly local TV'.³³ For example, one form of programming that the managing director said that he wanted 'to see exploited would be university sport, and perhaps even school sport, which is covered by local cable companies in America'.³⁴ The company also promised to offer programming for minorities within the local community, and made special mention of its plans for 'ethnic programming – including Asian and European channels'.³⁵ Indeed, it was claimed that there would be 'a channel specifically aimed at Nottingham's Asian population, with programmes in a number of Indian dialects'.³⁶

However, these contributions to the local community were not limited to Diamond Cable's programming. The cable system was also promoted through its ability to create greater interactivity within the community. For example, it was claimed that 'Home computers could ... be linked to each other via the telephone as well as to major computers housed in libraries and other information houses'.³⁷ Furthermore, one of Diamond Cable's key promotional strategies was that it provided free local telephone calls between its customers in the off-peak period, a strategy that was supposed to bring 'family and friends' together.³⁸ Diamond Cable was also supposed to help the local community in other ways. For example, it was claimed that the network would be 'an economic "trigger" that would create jobs itself and simulate the whole economy. Press coverage often made mention of the jobs that the company had created or would create, but it also claimed that 'cable's development was akin to that of the laying of the roads and railways'.³⁹ This comment is particularly important given the context of Nottingham. It repeats a common claim that

the development of telecommunications in the late 20th century was a 'revolution' akin to the 'industrial revolution'. Indeed, the roads and the railways were not only infrastructures that were essential to the development of the industrial revolution, but railway construction was the driving force behind a series of industries such as steel and engineering. This reference has specific significance within the context of Nottingham given that, as we saw in Chapter 2, Nottingham's history was distinguished by a lack of heavy industry. As a result, this comment suggests that while Nottingham may have been marginal to the industrial revolution, it would be central to the 'telecommunications revolution'.

Reports therefore continually stressed that Diamond Cable was 'the first operation of its kind in the world and it's here in Nottingham', a situation that supposedly meant: 'communications chiefs world-wide have their eyes firmly fixed on Nottingham as a unique new service is opened up to householders and businesses'.⁴⁰ The supposedly unique feature of Diamond Cable was that it was both a cable TV and telephone company. As Diamond Cable's public relations director put it: 'Until recently the US government refused to allow a direct tie-up between phone and TV companies, so we couldn't develop in the same way there.'⁴¹ Consequently, while Diamond Cable was frequently identified as an 'American cable company', it was not seen as an external imposition but quite the reverse. Rather than a American or even global media imposed upon the city that threatened its identity, Diamond Cable was seen from the first as an organic product of the city that demonstrated and enhanced its unique identity. The city was not only seen as attracting American investors due to its unique character but, as has already been suggested, the city's special conditions were seen as essential to the development of a similarly unique and groundbreaking enterprise:

The American company currently working out of a small office in Nottingham's Advanced Business Centre, is backed by Robert Wall and Alan McDonald, multi-millionaires with 25 years' experience in US cable who decided to apply for the Nottingham licence because of its business climate and 'progressive atmosphere'.⁴²

Diamond Cable's marketing director is even quoted as claiming: 'The Americans have chosen Nottingham because they feel that it's the ideal city and in the right position – between the North and South of England.'⁴³

As a result, it is implied that although its backers were American, the company would not simply be the satellite of an American operation. On the contrary, Nottingham's unique conditions made it the economic, cultural and geographical centre of a technological revolution. Furthermore, 'the importance the American backers put on the Nottingham operation' was supposedly demonstrated by the fact that 'senior executives [would be] moving here from Kentucky to live for at least four years to oversee the installation'.⁴⁴

Anxieties about the company's effects upon Nottingham did emerge, but not until the mid-1990s, five years after the company arrived in Nottingham. The process of laying cable, it was claimed, tore up streets and pavements around the city and was 'destroying huge numbers of trees on British streets'. Significantly, the evidence for this

claim came from the magazine *Country Living*, which represents the values of a British rural tradition, and claimed that 'cable companies are being afforded an "inexcusable" right to dig anywhere without permission'.⁴⁵ Trees were symbolically significant through their association with nature and rural life, rather than technology and urbanism.

However, the city's watchdog on the topic commended Diamond Cable for the 'immaculate' work that it had done, and claimed that problems were due to a fall in quality since the introduction of subcontractors. Diamond Cable themselves also pointed out that its workers and subcontractors 'are all warned about the risk to trees',⁴⁶ and it heavily promoted their use of 'a cunning gadget, which promises to wave goodbye to hole-in-the-road misery and could prevent trees being damaged'. This new machine was 'a new radar-directed under-ground digger' that was supposed to resemble 'the Mole out of *Thunderbirds*', and it was also stressed that Diamond Cable was 'the first company in the UK to use it'.⁴⁷

So crucial was Diamond Cable's association with Nottingham as a locality that, when it was purchased by NTL in 1998, its new owners stressed that it would 'continue to be run as an autonomous regional company and the Diamond brand will continue'.⁴⁸ Although this autonomy was short-lived, and the company changed its name to NTL Midlands by the following June, the decision to smooth the transition from one brand identity to another demonstrates the importance and value of Diamond Cable's association with the local area. It is also the case that many of the company's local features remain, such as the free local calls to other NTL customers in the off-peak period.

If the meaning of cable was therefore defined through its consumption within the locality of Nottingham, the meanings of satellite and cable were also clearly defined through their consumption within existing domestic arrangements. Often these technologies were explicitly 'for the children', either as a present or else simply to provide them with an electronic babysitter.⁴⁹ In another situation, however, we found that in one family, where the parents were divorced and the children lived with their mother, it was their father who subscribed to satellite, a situation that pleased the children when they visited him.⁵⁰ Here the subscription may have been a way of encouraging the children to visit, or of making their time with him more enjoyable. It may even have been a way of alleviating a sense of guilt or deflecting a sense of betrayal or resentment.

It is therefore significant that, particularly in the early years, satellite and cable were specifically sold through their association with youth. Not only were the film channels sold, in part, as a youth-oriented product, but satellite and cable were also sold through their exclusive access to cult programming associated with youth culture: *The Simpsons*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Beverly Hills 90210* and cult channels such as Bravo and the Sci-Fi Channel. Indeed, the cult channels have become a particular point of identification and disidentification with satellite and cable.⁵¹ One respondent was even moved to complain about the ways in which 'ropey films become cult classics'.⁵²

However, when cable or satellite was not bought specifically for the children it was either seen as 'a family thing',⁵³ or else seen as the husband's decision, a decision that is primarily influenced by the presence of the sports channels.⁵⁴ The only time that a sub-

scription to cable or satellite was presented as the result of a woman's choice was when the woman was single.⁵⁵

As a result, while new media are creating new forms of film consumption, the claim that they will make leisure outside the home redundant needs serious re-evaluation. Not only are the new media consumed within specific social and cultural contexts, but there are other factors involved in the consumption of film which are often ignored through an overemphasis on these new media.

Notes

1. Hubbard, forthcoming.
2. Stefan, 25, unemployed teacher (KE19).
3. Delma, 40, teacher (KEQ).
4. Andrew, 14, student (KE27).
5. Anonymous male, 44, student (RMQ); Jeannie, 32, student (KE7).
6. NEP, 28 June 1989.
7. Moores, 2000, p. 109.
8. See, for example, Toffler, 1980. For a critique of this kind of position, see Frankel, 1987; and Graham, 1997.
9. Garnham, 1981.
10. Whitegate Mothers and Toddlers Group (KE13).
11. Julie, 31, playgroup co-ordinator (KE34).
12. See Brunson, 1997; and Moores, 1993; and Moores, 2000.
13. See Garnham, 1990.
14. Crisell, 1997, p. 256.
15. Sharan, 33, nurse/tutor (KE35).
16. Marc, 25, student (KE15).
17. Tracey, 37, solicitor (KE4).
18. Lisa, 29, teacher (KEQ).
19. Garnham, 1990, p. 118.
20. Ibid. p. 123.
21. For a discussion of the debates over 'wall-to-wall Dallas', see Webster, 1988; Morley and Robins. 1995. For an excellent reflection on the quality debates, see Brunson, 1997.
22. NEP, 7 November 1989.
23. Crisell, 1997, p. 257.
24. NEP, 27 January 2001.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Andrew, 14, student (KE27).
28. Moores, 1993; and Moores, 2000.
29. Andrew, 14, student (KE27).
30. Stefan, 25, unemployed teacher (KE19).
31. Moores, 2000, p. 109.
32. NEP, 8 November 1990.

33. Gary Davis, Managing Director, Diamond Cable, 'Diamond Cable – Today and Tomorrow', in *Nottingham Society of Engineers Newslines*, 5 February 1995, no. 3, p. 2.
34. NEP, 19 January 1994.
35. NEP, 8 November 1990.
36. NEP, 22 September 1989.
37. NEP, 28 June 1989.
38. Diamond Cable promotional flier, Nottingham City Library Collection.
39. NEP, 6 February 1991.
40. NEP, 2 December 1993.
41. Ibid.
42. NEP, 28 June 1989.
43. NEP, 22 September 1989.
44. *Nottingham Recorder*, 28 September 1989.
45. NEP, 9 June 1994.
46. NEP, 16 October 1995.
47. NEP, 26 October 1995.
48. NEP, 17 June 1998.
49. Moores, 1993.
50. Andrew, 14, student (KE27).
51. James, 15, student (KE23); and Tracey, 37, solicitor (KE4).
52. Paul, 31, administrator (KE26).
53. Margot, 40, residential social worker (KEQ).
54. Celia, 62, retired cleaner (KE6).
55. Tracey, 37, solicitor (KE4).

Conclusion

We have argued here that the meanings of different modes of film consumption are tied to their location within the cultural geography of the city and that, for this reason, the emergence of new modes of film consumption does not necessarily render older modes redundant. Moreover, the emergence of new modes of film consumption may change the meaning of older modes of film consumption, but this is because their meanings are defined in relation to one another: they are not simply seen as identical. As a result, while we have witnessed repeated claims about a privatisation of 'public' life, 'public' life has simply failed to disappear. While more leisure has become home centred, people not only still feel the need to get out every now and again but 'going out' is defined by its alternative: 'staying in'. However, the meanings of these activities and the places within which they occur are also subject to intense political struggle: not everyone has the same experience of 'staying in' or 'going out', or the same access to different sites within the city. Different sites become associated with different social groups and thus the experience of them involves the exclusion of others.

All these processes are exemplified in the most recent development within the landscape of film consumption within Nottingham: the opening of the Cornerhouse. At precisely the time when it was being claimed that new technologies, such as home cinema and the internet, would render cinemagoing redundant, developers embarked on the construction of a major new cinema and entertainment complex within the city centre, in which the cinema was to act as the major draw of customers. Nor was Nottingham unique in this respect.

In the 1990s, developers turned their attention from the multiplex to the 'megaplex'. As William Paul notes, in 1994, *Variety* published a story on 'a new wave in theatre building that confirms the trend in exhibition' in which:

Every possible thing is contained under one roof, with free-standing theatres independent of malls that can operate as destinations in themselves by being 'coupled with entertainment centres encompassing everything from miniature golf and virtual reality games to "food courts" and toddler compounds.'¹

In other words, rather than simply a multiplex attached to a larger out-of-town development, in the megaplex the cinema itself is the central, organising feature of an entertainment complex. Furthermore, as this trend took hold in Britain, it was increasingly associated with developments within inner-city rather than out-of-town locations, and these developments became known as urban entertainment centres (UECs). For example, Star City in Birmingham was referred to as 'one of the first US-style UECs in