



## **New Media and the Changing Nature of Urban Place**

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Urban place is a well conceptualized notion that denotes a physical space in which people gather to exchange goods, ideas and information and this function of place has remained relatively stable over time. This paper investigates how the growing incorporation of digital communication media will change the role and the nature of urban places. Every medium of communication has affected how we perceive and create places. Throughout history, patterns of urban development can be discerned concurrent to the communication technologies of those eras. In the traditional market place, the agora served as the place for interaction and exchange of information, mainly by the word of mouth; the heightened efficiency of the printing press during the industrial revolution led to the distribution of newspapers and posters that could reach out to more people and even enable mass propaganda; cities as centers of provision and consumption were and are reflected by the vast presence of advertising signage, billboards and other related commercial displays; the electronic or digital age is reflected through our various interactions with online information systems, increasingly in wireless mode. In the 21st century, new media presents endless possibilities due to the fluidity of digital technology and these needs to be accounted for in the place-making process. The interconnectivity and ubiquity of new media allow the flexibility of live-work dwellings, telecommuting and the formation of virtual communities, thereby reducing the need for face-to-face contact and social proximity. This in turn impinges on the traditional notion of place as a bounded realm within which events and encounters 'take place'. The present challenge lies in determining the type of place which emerges when digital technology and physical space intersect. This paper adopts Carmona's dimensions of urban design -morphological, functional, social, visual, perceptual, temporal, and an added economical dimension- as a framework to highlight the potential effect of new media on contemporary and historic urban places. Drawing upon examples which typify the integration of new media in urban places, the paper focuses on Digital Media Street, Seoul and Milla Digital, Zaragoza as case studies to emphasize how new media transform urban places. The paper contends that the use of digital technology creates a mediated realm which is more versatile and responsive to its context and the needs of its users, thereby augmenting the value of that place. This paper will conclude that new media contribute to the changing nature of place and need to be included in broadening its definition.

**KEY WORDS:** Urban place, new media.