

Watts and economist Edward Glaeser have shown that online networking tools tend to be complements to—or representations of—your real-world network, rather than substitutes for it. So city dwellers may actually find these technologies more useful than do people in suburban areas.

B.L. Ochman is a blogger with an audience of 100,000. Yet one of her strongest avenues for socializing and networking is Central Park, where she takes her chocolate Labradoodle every morning.

"I have been introduced to more than one very major client through people I met in Central Park," she says. "If I need a lawyer, doctors, a printer, I ask people at the park." Rolfe would say that the

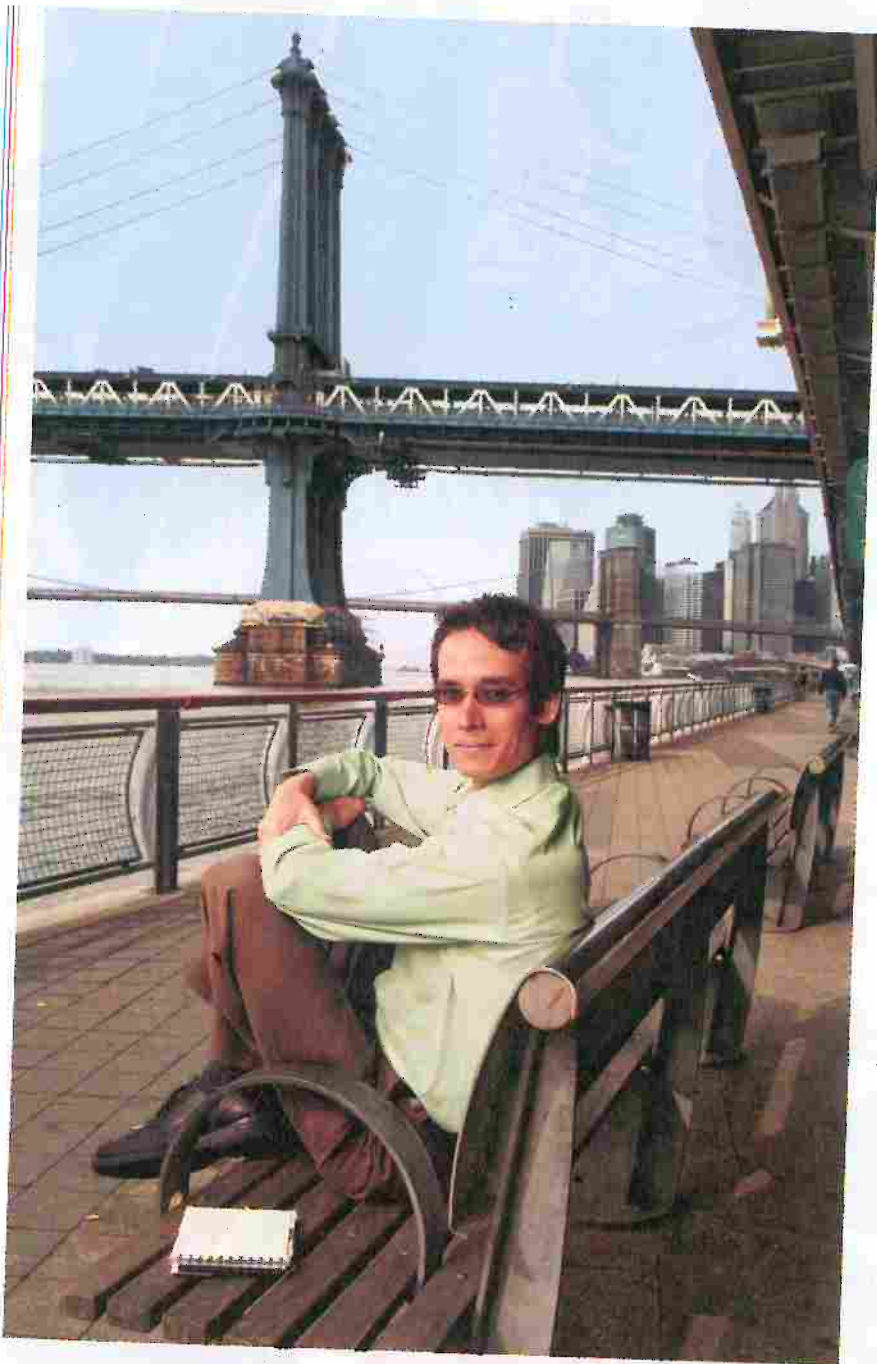
"IN AN AGGRESSIVE CITY LIKE NEW YORK, THERE ARE MORE PEOPLE TELLING ME WHETHER MY IDEAS ARE FULL OF CRAP. THERE ARE MORE IDEAS, AND THE IDEAS GET SUBJECT TO SOME SORT OF SELECTION."

iversity of this group, meeting every morning at the park by chance, makes a more useful set of "weak ties" because the people there know others that Ochman doesn't already know. Olson would say that Ochman probably relies on her park contacts for this kind of advice because of the trust produced by knowing them face to face. And they're both right.

Every year, more and more complex jobs—legal work, journalism, product design—are outsourced around the world. Richer online communication tools like teleconferencing become more widely available, we'll all be dancing on the toes—new types of collaboration will be possible. But since those technology tools will be available to city, rural, and suburban dwellers alike, the playing field will never truly be leveled. If creativity and innovation are your goals, the advantages of joining in the bustle of a city crowd will probably endure. **PT**

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Photograph by **KARJEAN LEVINE**



JAMES BANTA, New York

AGE: 36

IN 1999, artist James Banta walked the entire 32-mile perimeter of Manhattan in a single day with a few friends, a journey that eventually became the multimedia art installation "Circumanhattanation." "There are parts of Manhattan where millions of people pass every day and parts no one ever sees," says Banta, a native New Yorker. The city figures prominently in his architectural preservation efforts—he has worked on iconic sites, including Ellis Island and the Apollo Theater—and in his own artwork, which deals with geography, history, and nations such as India. "New York causes me to think a lot about the rest of the world as a small, connected place," he says, "because you have access to some feature of everything in the world here."