

not through the demarcation of spatial zones for receiving poorer services, but through the automated scrutiny of individuals. Individuals will be excluded when venturing into the premium commercial spaces of *their* city due to their appearance, habits or challenge to dominant power holders' normative concepts of who belongs where and when within the city. One thing, above all, is very clear: these trends mean that the politics of the street need to be quickly linked to the politics of code in critical research and practice.

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Mobile Phones, Place-centred Communication and Neo-community

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The mobile phone has become part of the needs and hopes of the modern individual. It is an electronic communication device which has changed the way people live, through the introduction of mobile phone oriented companionship and tele-sociability. At the same time there are links to older forms of interaction. The incorporation of mobile phones into our way of life is therefore a two-way process: the device is not only adapted to the way people live but ways of living are also changed as a consequence of the device (Kopomaa, 2000).

The development of mobile phones seems to be a seamless extension of the rapid growth of mobility. Modern people thrive in streets, squares, department stores and cafes. They escape the monotonous, possibly even controlling atmosphere at home, perhaps redirecting desires outside the home towards the social contacts to be found there. The digital lifestyle flourishes in public places. The attraction of public spaces is their ability to provide stimulation and pleasure. The mobile phone allows one to always be 'at home'. It may constitute a virtual agora, a meeting place, a game or a smart device for the processing and management of information. The urban character of the modern lifestyle is also revealed in that mobile phones are now used as a tool which facilitates contact with nature. A portable phone is easy to take along whether you are going to a summer house, boating or whatever, and it also provides an element of safety and security.

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This article explores the ways mobile phones enable people to side-step anticipatory social arrangements and allows spontaneous forms of real-time interaction. The implications of the increasing expansion of mobile phone users is considered in relation to the evolution of communities and places.

The Nature of Mobile Phone Communication

Social Efficiency

The mobile phone is a device for enhancing both temporal and social efficiency. It is used like a watch, a computer or a robot to enhance efficiency and utility. It has contributed to the reorganization of work and leisure, through increasing information flows, enabling more efficient mobility and making time schedules more flexible. Continuous accessibility has replaced the need to follow predetermined schedules. The mobile phone not only makes the calendar unnecessary, it is a calendar. It is a device for determining the co-ordinates of everyday living, these co-ordinates being friends, acquaintances and their schedules or the lack of them.

Distance working enabled by the mobile phone is actually 'close working', because it is constantly close to the worker, whether at home or in transit. It also offers the possibility of working longer hours and avoiding interruptions during the day. Life is no longer structured by the rhythm of work and leisure, they have become inextricably intertwined one with one another.

The idea of the mobile phone as a tool that increases 'social efficiency' in many ways condenses and describes modern urban life. Social efficiency may be understood in terms of increased contacts and immersed, synchronized living. The mobile phone condenses our use of time, allowing us to do many things at once. It also embodies the idea of individual mobility. It offers a tool for organizing time schedules and changing their priority according to the needs of the present situation. To be mobile is part of the coveted freedom offered by the city life. Mobility is dependent on various technologies. The central technology has been the car. In addition to the car, the mobile phone has become a cultural icon for mobility, freedom and possibility. Some now argue that the culture of speed associated with the instant contact offered by mobile phones has replaced the older cultures of urbanism (Sheller & Urry, 2000; Virilio, 1980).

It is not, however, just about speed. The accessibility of a companion invites one to make contact and as the mechanism for such contact-making, the mobile phone offers its user a feeling of communality. Users choose the person who most closely satisfies their preferences at any given moment. A call made on a mobile phone does not require schedules to be compared or advanced knowledge of the time or the place of a meeting. Calls are made without any special purpose or advance arrangements. However, in contrast, the mobile phone has also been criticized for the superficiality of the interaction generated by the device, such as indifferent behaviour towards one's surroundings, the privatization of lifestyle and increased opportunity for control.

Instant Connections

Social efficiency has not only been affected by the spread of mobile phones but they have also impacted upon traditional social structures. Mobile phones are perfectly suited to the ideology of an individualistic society committed to networking (Castells, 2001). They embody an expanding notion of social interaction, in which real-time action and unexpectedness are essential elements. Activity is liberated from fixed schedules. The

points of reference of everyday life are acquaintances who are contacted by mobile phone. Other people working and moving in synchrony with oneself are the new co-ordinates to which life is anchored. Nothing is agreed upon or fixed in precise terms. Instead, the spectrum of individual choice is kept as broad as possible. A certain *ex tempore* lifestyle becomes more widespread. Both shared and private decisions are expected to be taken rapidly. Schedules are not determined precisely because they can be adjusted along the way—along the way also, in the sense that life is a continuous flow from one place or point to another. Rather than replacing meetings, the mobile phone complements them. It is often used for instant contacting with the management of all kinds of affairs becoming a continuous project. On the one hand, incoming calls can interrupt an activity, on the other, they can force the user to take a stand or be precise on matters which do not necessarily require such action. Nevertheless, such phone conversations take place on public transport and in shops or other public spaces, necessitating people to stay within hearing distance of each other.

Instant Communities

Instead of communal forms of interaction, public life in contemporary societies is characterized by individuality as noted above and personal portable phones have contributed to this process. At the same time, it can be argued there is an opposite trend in that mobile phones connect users to a wider social network. Electronic communications give rise to shared, even collective practices, which realize a fleeting instant of communality. For the people in such networks, which they themselves have created, a kind of swarm intelligence is present. It encourages 'mates' to make decisions together. For example, young people, who occupy the key position in the culture of mobile phones, have attained a new kind of communality through the use of text messages. They have found a solution that allows them to belong, to be a member of a group, to live together while avoiding the lack of the significant meaning-producing co-ordinates of life.

Contacts with other people entail the risk of losing one's individuality, because human interaction is characterized by a tendency towards conformity. While the mobile phone can be used to avoid physical contact, users perhaps inadvertently come to accept the demand for uniformity inherent in following the shared rhythm and schedules of their telecompanions. The mobile phone is the centre of an 'unsocial' social life. It is a place one frequents regularly as well as a 'decentralized meeting place'. The resulting network of friends comprises a kind of mobile neo-community and the object of shared interests and constant maintenance (Maffesoli, 1996).

The privatization of our way of life is at present very much characterized by temporal and spatial changes, nevertheless this does not imply that life centres around the nuclear family. Life focuses instead on the devices of personal electronic communication. The portable phone is a tool for contacting members of the family outside of the home and an amalgam which unites them. In parallel with such intensification of the familial bond, the privatization occasioned by telecommunications is also associated with a strong need to create and control a personal territory, in both spatial and temporal terms. For the individual, the new opportunities offered by telecommunications increase their control of everyday life, while at the same time highlighting the risks inherent to challenging the existing social structures. Telecommunication devices therefore engender membership in broader social networks, although communality is not manifested physically as it never acquires a concrete existence.

Some people have expressed the desire for restaurants and other public places to be free from the ringing and loud talking associated with mobile phones. With the increasing popularity of the mobile phone, users have engendered irritation, even embarrassment and avoidance behaviour everywhere. The mobile phone has also lowered traditional boundaries between the private and the public spheres of life. The very audible beeping signals emitted by mobile phones have occasioned the creation of areas where the use of the mobile phone is frowned upon or prohibited, such as libraries, early morning commuter trains or queues in cafeterias.

Public spaces are a natural environment for mobile phone use. More visibly than before, the urban space has become the living room of the inhabitants, a space where one can manage one's affairs and spend leisure time. The mobile phone increases the pleasantness of public waiting halls and other places where people have to spend time. The pleasure brought by an unexpected call can be seen on the faces of the people talking or sending messages on the phone: idle moments are transformed into the maintenance of social contacts. No longer does one have to feel lonely—unless it happens that no-one calls. The hub of momentariness is established wherever calls are made from. The placelessness of communication has not only engendered fleeting functional condensation, but also the decentralization of everyday interaction.

The above discussion of the impact of the mobile phone on the nature of social networks and notions of community is summarized below:

- Contemporary life is characterized by a desire to live in synchrony.
- New notions of time (non-linear and 'social-rhythmic time') are impacting on the way mundane practices are organized and managed.
- People wish to be more flexible in the way they organize their activities and communicate.
- Mobile communication devices allow people to be and stay in one place, not necessarily to be 'mobile'.
- New notions of locality are evolving, based on chosen hubs of tele-communication, contacts and services.

Planning in the Mobile City

Until now the effects of mobile communication on urban policy and planning have been almost invisible. The mobile phone communication has been absorbed into contemporary urban culture. The everyday life of an urbanite has, however, been dramatically changed. Cities have now been turned into mobile communication environments, where streets and specifically public indoor and outdoor spaces have been changed. In the city centre of the 24-hour society life continues round the clock. Home pages displaying a part of the city in mobiles or in pocket-sized computers can strengthen local identity and offer planners instruments for participation.

People's relationship with urban spaces has been more intense following the invasion of the mobile phone as pedestrians have territorialized and domesticated public places for their private uses. Perceptions of the city have changed. Until now this has been considered a phenomenon mainly affecting people's private lives and for architects and planners it has represented 'placeless' communication. Consequently, this change has not been directly connected to urban design and planning. Perhaps the design of 'silent, off-limit zones' for mobiles is something which will inspire city planners in the near future!

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