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Modes of Being in Mobile Telecommunication

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ABSTRACT

In tandem with the boom in mobile media, the number of scholarly articles and essays on the social impact of the mobile phone is increasing every day. Some recent studies have expanded their focus to pay closer attention to specific social and individual uses in “developing” countries, acknowledging mobile use at different social and political levels in different regions of the world, and covering a wide range of other topics related to the mobile phone. However, much of the argument seems to follow preset lines or notions such as “seamless connectivity,” “ubiquity,” “flow” and “new subjectivities.” What do these notions actually signal to us?

As can be seen in some of these examples—the so-called “iPod jack” practices of live sharing, the difficult levels of representation in the interactive theater play *Call Cutta Mobile Phone Theater* by Rimini Protokoll—communication technology functions as a setting that deliberately enhances subject-making processes and aims at a commodification of subjectivity. Today, individual subjectivity seems to be considered more important than ever, and has already become implicated in an economic cycle of subjectivity all its own, involved in production. In my paper, I focus on the relations of individual subjectivity and social systems. By analyzing one project in particular, *Call Cutta Mobile Phone Theater*, I attempt to clarify technologically enhanced modes of “being-in-space” produced through individual and collective uses of digital mobile communication.

INTRODUCTION

The interventions of portable digital devices such as mobile telephones, MP3 players, PDA devices, and many others, have been described as new and crucial factors in the formation of contemporary notions of space. Especially important for the perspective of this study is the notion that mobile telephony is said to enhance the complexity of

subjective space—for example, by its passive aural communication functions, and by questioning and relativizing existing spatial boundaries. The impact of these devices' mobility (which also informs their users' mobility) is sometimes paralleled to the shift in photography brought about by the transition from still to moving images in the 19th century.

Mobile phone studies and practices have each faced rapid development over a rather short time span. Together with the statistics demonstrating endlessly increasing diffusion rates of mobile telephones, the prefixed ideas of connectivity and of ideology—"seamless connectivity," "ubiquity," and others—are frequently used in a hyperbolic rhetoric of daily life. It therefore does not take any great amount of discourse analysis to point to the ideological character of these constructions. Here, it is important to be conscious of what has and what has not really changed under the influence of wireless technology and portable gadgets. What has actually changed (this much can be said) is the social institutions in public environments, leading to a variety of significant alterations in the relation of public and private space, as well as introducing critical changes in the perception of and attention to the self as related to an external social reality. This implies not only a transcendence of spatial models, but also modal changes in our "being-in-space," or more precisely, in subjectification, in settings provided by mobile telephony.

However, significant problems of mobile telephony research have been located in the deliberately expansive nature of the field. Because of its very character—one of essentially complicating spaces, territories, and domains, resulting from the emphasis on connectivity and mobility—this kind of research does not fit easily into any single academic discourse. While mobile telephony research connects and engages in different, otherwise rarely coinciding terrains, categories within the academic field have long become unstable, just as so-called new media have brought variability, modularity, automation, and transformations of encoding and decoding systems. In our context, this suggests a possible relevance and potential use of the cognitive modes found in the poetics of art works—art works as alternative forms of knowledge that enable artists and viewers to examine current phenomena while they are still emerging. What sort of fundamental gaps lie between reality, visions and imaginaries? How do artists observe, process, and contradict the "dispositive" of mobile communication within their theories and practices?

Seeing some notions quite repetitively used, one cannot help but notice that the original contexts of some of these notions are easily changed, or even forgotten. One familiar example is the qualification of communication as "seamless" (seamless connectivity, interaction, integration) and "ubiquitous." It should be mentioned briefly here that the notion of "seamlessness" was regarded as describing something undesirable and negative when Mark Weiser (1991) first presented the idea—together with the set of notions of "seamfulness" within a universalizing system. Yet the positive qualification

has been more widely adopted, even though some phenomena still invite one to reconsider the notion of “seamfulness,” as with beautiful seam, good seamful design, etc. (MacColl et al. 2002; Greenfield 2006). Seamlessness as a structural metaphor is of course connected to imageries of weaving, networking, and working in general, but in the context of mobile telephony it has served the obvious purpose of conveying a simplified picture of a complex hierarchy—one that is certainly more complex than a simple woven and sewn texture. This is even truer for the notion of subjectivity or “subjectivities” that is frequently used within communicative contexts. Many discourse-analytical approaches speak of “new subjectivity/ies.” “mobile subjectivity,” “data subjectivity,” “digital subjectivity,” etc. There are different nuances and emphases in each of these notions, but their specific meaning is not easy to grasp. How do we understand what is actually happening around us? Can it really be seen as a harbinger of the emergence of a “new subjectivity?” Instead of blindly following such an image, it seems advisable to start concretely rethinking these big frameworks, focusing on the “case” of mobile telephony. In my paper, I attempt to examine the juxtaposition of communications technologies with contemporary notions of “subjectivity/ies” in the context of mobile telephony. I also examine the metaphorical dimension of communications technologies through an artistic project, *Call Cutta Mobile Phone Theater*. This was the subject of a documentary I presented as part a series of mobile phone art projects for the exhibition *The Invisible Landscapes*.¹

WHAT IS CALL CUTTA MOBILE PHONE THEATER?

Call Cutta Mobile Phone Theater is a theater piece that was organized by the German/Swiss theater collective “Rimini Protokoll” in 2005. Essentially a mobile phone-based project, it provided personalized guided city tours via mobile telephone conversations in order to explore hidden memories, dimensions and layers in cities that had seemed familiar to the local participants. The project was divided into two parts—one in **Calcutta**, and the other in **Berlin**. In the first part, in Calcutta, the project was a remote-guided city tour for local people, who were navigated by a voice from a call center. The call agents operated as guides and actors at the same time. They navigated the audience from point to point through city streets, making them “discover” details, entering into a more and more personal dialogue, talking about their own memories, and arranging for the guided persons to perform minor tasks.

The second part of the project connected Calcutta to the “other side of the world”, Berlin. The navigator was still at the same call center, participating in the project there during nighttime in Calcutta, and during daytime in Berlin. The audience members in Berlin were guided through many surprising sites of “their own city” by a voice with an Indian accent. However bizarre this second part sounds, the Berlin version actually grew to become a more intimate conversation between two people who were remote from each other and connected only by telephone. In the documentary *Call Cutta*, directed

by Anjan Dutt (2005), Stefan Kaegi of Rimini Protokoll comments that:

[...] at the beginning, they [the participants] will feel somehow like being caught by a service line, because there is a service line at the other end. As time goes by, they (participants) start to trust the person on the other side of the phone, the voice becomes very human, and then you realize that this human voice is also lying on the phone, flirting with you on the phone.

Rimini Protokoll juxtaposed two widely distant cities, Berlin and Calcutta, by means of mobile telephony. This unexpected combination—that is, the absurdity of being guided through Berlin by a person on the other side of the globe who has probably never been there, combined with exoticism towards the Other (conversing with people in Calcutta)—opened up a new approach to thinking about mobile connections. For example, without idealizing theoretical assumptions of political thought, *Call Cutta* placed a new perspective on politics by reflecting a banal daily communication via the mobile telephone. In directing a lot of attention to the call center industry in Infinity Towers, Salt Lake City (in Calcutta), it highlighted interrelations between industry and globalization at the “personal” level of one mobile phone call. It showed how new communication technologies penetrate dynamic transnational economies, and how a global network system functions in unexpected ways, reaching into the existence of another human being on the other side of the world. What realities of individual existence have been left out or ignored in the development of theories and context in wireless portable technology? How can the invisible phenomena around mobile telephony be reflected back into thinking on the subject?

ASSEMBLING/SHUFFLING SUBJECTIVITIES

She is Mrs. Knowles, listening from Manchester. His name is Neelanjan, who calls himself Nick. He is one of the countless Indians who hide their real identity. (Dutt 2005)

Like conventional plays, there were dialogues here too. Sammy (a call agent) spoke his part, and I made up my lines as we went along. He told me anecdotes, I commented. He sang a song, I complimented. I asked questions, he answered. I laughed, he said it sounded like a cascading waterfall. I laughed again, conscious and embarrassed. (Wahi 2005)

The second quotation above is from one of the *Call Cutta* participants in Berlin. During the *Call Cutta* “performance,” call agents played multiple roles based on a script and, depending on individual necessity, on spontaneous improvisation. The agent started out in the role of an official instructor, but soon moved into that of a more friendly “tour guide.” As the conversation got more personal, and reversals of the questioning position were allowed, the mobile communication created the feeling that there were

two subjects who were remotely sharing a similar vision, almost as if their respective partners were just beside them. The agent shifted into the roles of guide, romantic storyteller, practical advisor, director, performer, personal friend, actor, and the exotic Other. Helgard Haug, a member of Rimini Protokoll, describes how “voices sensitively reflect[ed] psychological changes, negotiating modes and spaces of communication” (Dutt 2005). Using different modes of subjectivity, the agent made the participants feel secure. They did not feel on their own, but were guided into a comfortable zone, establishing a close bond.

The illusionary impression produced by the performance of different selves may give access to intimate territory where two subjects start to interact on a very personal level. Conversing about one’s personal life—even if in a mode of assuming a fake personality—functions as a catalyst of communication better than any purely rational exchange of information would do. The illusionary impression produced by the performance of different modes of self/ves through telephony may open up intimate territory where the two subjects start to interact on a very personal level.

On taking a cautious look at the documentary, the procedure at work in *Call Cutta* articulates a persona through the negotiations between a call center agent and a participant. In these negotiations, personal memories are shared and rearranged in relation to the specific site addressed in the mobile phone conversation. In the bilateral dialogue, each recreates the other’s persona; it is actually constituted by the invisible subjects themselves. They articulate themselves through the mutual creation of a fictional persona about which they negotiate their relations in a very concrete way via a personally connected voice. In a sense, call agents represent how the constitutive elements of subjectivities are copied, assembled, shuffled and (re)created as subjectivities. In other words, they “download” more and more fragments of the fictitious subject and “intimate” information, serving as a default persona that can be reacted to and juxtapose with subjectivities other than one’s own. Then their “updated”, articulated subjectivity can be “uploaded” again. That is, the process becomes a recursive form of subjectification.

In our specific context, *Call Cutta* can be examined as a model for different modes of subjectivity—different ways of understanding the construction of the self—that are developed in the quotidian use of mobile telecommunication. The increased mobility of new telephony structures changes the way we think, the way we form communications, and, as I want to argue, the very concept of subjectivity itself. Going back once more to the possibility (quoted at the beginning of this section) of hiding one’s identity by using different names, I would like to think about how concepts of the self and of identity are addressed here as “subject”. What does the use of fake names actually imply? Does it mean that one starts to perform as another self? Does it only remain a surface by which a person is identified through a specific sound? Does it have an effect on how a person’s subjectivity is integrated? There are certainly opportunities when people need to change the way they look or imagine themselves; when, in order to be accepted, they

resort to not telling everything about themselves, to representing themselves differently, emphasizing different properties of qualities, or simply using a different name. In *Call Cutta*, there is a short episode in which the call agent tells how, under the Nazi regime, his grandfather had to change his name from “Samir Singh” to “Martin Heynold.” Such a change of name is but one example of an “integration process” that is expected to occur when migrants come to start new lives in a new country. Changing one’s name is subordination to power. It is a strategy for the subaltern² to fit in and survive. In the same manner, the switching of subjectivity/ies can be seen not as an act of liberation, but as subordination to the rules of global capitalism.

With these subjectivities, the gap is filled between a banal, individual act of communication and the globalized market in the setting of the digital mobile network. Pointing out such contemporary instable subject positions in the dispersed social fields and in the identity politics of late capitalism, the art historian David Joselit (2000) refers to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985, 110–111), arguing: “It [identity politics] is lateral in that it arises from a different economy of coexisting subject positions rather than emerging from an essential human depth.” In the context of post-colonialism, Joselit designates such a shift—from a model of subjectivity that is founded in interiority, to one in which the self is constituted through a play of surfaces—as a condition of “psychological flatness”, echoing what Fredric Jameson (1991, 9) earlier described as the “emergence of a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense.” Keeping in mind that the juxtaposition of “types” of subjectivities can only be a metaphorical equivalence, is it such a form of unfulfilled, and never fulfillable, subjectivity (since differentiation is almost its only “purpose”) that can be observed in *Call Cutta*, or in attitudes towards customizing communication and personal representation through personalized ringtones in mobile telephones?

Considering the juxtaposed subjects in *Call Cutta*, such an attitude of modifying subjectivities can be seen both in the call agents and in the participants, as they interact with and reflect those of the agents. What does the process of “re-articulating” subjectivity indicate today? Being aware of the fact that the conceptualization of subjectivity is also set in motion, is mobilized, we see that mobile telecommunication inevitably problematizes the intricate relationship of the visible and the invisible. In other words, it is not only about spaces created by and in portable artifacts which are re-rendering or re-appropriating, a space under a different grammar derived from pre-decided conditions, but also about the subjectivities symbolizing and closely attached to capitalism. Looking back to the late 1980s and 1990s, there were extensive cultural inquiries into relations between the body and electronic technologies, in which new forms of subjectivity were theorized, from cyborgs to digital flâneurs to networked space. Epistemological pluralism was frequently discussed together with postmodern thinking and the creation of network spaces (Turkle and Papert 1992; Turkle 2001). Through the shift, we may have started to become familiar with a different epistemic modality of

self “presence.” Can we say that portable network devices accelerate the exploration of alternative forms of the self on the level of something that is done in everyday life? And with stronger bonds to capitalism?

“IMMATERIAL LABOR” AND INTIMACY IN MOBILE TELEPHONY

Examining *Call Cutta* from yet another angle, it is easy to see that communication itself has become an important—if not the most important—form of labor, as well as figuring prominently in processes important to the realization of projects. This circumstance raises more questions than it can offer answers about relationships between labor and economic value in the spectacular phase of the capitalist system. Referring to such a transformation of forms of labor, thinkers from the historical Italian Operaist Movements—for example, Maurizio Lazzarato, Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno, and others—elucidated the notion of “immaterial labor” in the late 1990s (Lazzarato 1996; Virno 1996; Negri and Hardt 2002), and stated the dramatically increased capitalist value of subjectivity. According to Lazzarato, “capitalism changes value and sensitivity” and “the management mandate to ‘become subjects of communication’ threatens to be even more totalitarian than the earlier rigid division between mental and manual labor (ideas and execution/mind and body), because capitalism seeks to involve even the worker’s personality and subjectivity within the production of value” (Lazzarato 1996). His statement (which, by talking of a “struggle against work,” refers back to notions of work and labor developed in the earlier context of the Operaist Movement) can underline the importance of mobile phone studies in such a case study as that of *Call Cutta*, understood not as a unitary approach in the field of knowledge and inquiry, but from a much more general, philosophical viewpoint.

Looking at *Call Cutta* again, the project uses a naïve fascination at its functional root—the capacity to communicate in a surrogate intimacy even with a total stranger on the other side of the world. Actually, in terms of “immaterial labor,” this may be the most controversial point of the whole project. In *Call Cutta*, communication is treated as equivalent to working with structures and contents with different criteria, consumable by new communications technologies. Mobile telecommunication consumes not only information, but also (the “Indian” operator’s) subjectivities, which enrich and valorize otherwise neutral information through their handling, copying and editing in their productive and reproductive labor as part of the working class. Implicitly, *Call Cutta* uses the figure of the call agent as a generic application of the subjectivity of the initiators, and it commodifies the Indian operators’ personal subjectivities enacted in addition to their profession as call center information mediators working under exploitative labor conditions. Actually the role of “hidden-city guide tour” can be realized (and has been realized in many other projects³) with other technologies, such as Bluetooth, GPS, Wireless Internet with sensors, and others. But instead of combining the different wireless technologies, *Call Cutta* used a call agent as “the application of subjectivity,” and it succeeded in inserting an additional layer of subjectivity into the line of production.

Here, processes of realization, production and consumption are inseparable, because in the realms of mobile communication, the modernist distinctions between instrumental action and communicative action no longer function. Within the project, participants probably were not even conscious of the act of consumption they were performing: they were consuming without knowing what they consumed, and were becoming part of an inseparable set-up of agency in late capitalism. The complexity within the project was not limited to the group of call agents, but extended to the audience as well:

Who was the real protagonist of this play? It seemed that the way when we began as he urged me to see his world. Instead, I landed up performing, partly for others and partly for myself... Without technology this play wouldn't have been possible. Yet it talked about the scary world of call centers swallowing our youth and locking them in the dungeon of their stomachs. If theatre is about live interaction between, at least, two people, in this case there was a mobile phone, voices, strangers and I. Did I act? Then, what was *Call Cutta*? Was it really theatre? (Wahi 2005)

This is another quote from a *Call Cutta* audience member. It made me pay closer attention to the fact that commodification and consumption depend not only on the subjectivities of the call agents, but also on those of the participants, who were supposed to be on the consumer side. Were they also a part of production? Were they a constitutive unit in the commodification of subjectivity/ies?

What I raise here may sound overly critical, but the criticism is aimed at further articulating contemporary modes of mobile telecommunication. Needless to say, mobile communication surely opens up positive options as well,⁴ in a double act of communicating and consuming. In the case of *Call Cutta*, it is important to mention the different starting points of the audience members as against the call agents. For the audience members, *Call Cutta* was a participatory project that they entered out of a private interest and in their leisure time, while for the agents it was a "job" by which they could support themselves. Here the relationship of subjectivity can be seen as a part of an economic system and a processing configuration of self-articulation. Ultimately, subject formation is located today within economic systems that are stronger than ever before.

As can be seen in *Call Cutta*, this has exceeded the conditions, which are neither due to an "informational/cultural content" or "skill", but "humanizing" labor in a working class context, that is, more like subjectivity in general. With the current capitalist interest in what has been called the "knowledge industry", there is no longer any certain emphasis on specific (artistic/creative) subjectivity that is meant to stand for the "production of knowledge" or the production of cultural content. A predominant tendency of linguistic power in post-Fordist labor (Virno 2000) invites subjects in general to be a part of "production". But we should not forget that radical changes have

emerged not only concerning notions and definitions of labor, but also concerning concepts of subjectivities. How, in which terms, can we think of these simultaneous transformations?

Rimini Protokoll's intention was to invent a cultural use for those economic structures and infrastructures exploited by global capitalism. To put it cynically, *Call Cutta* eventually introduced a concrete model to capitalize and to exploit new layers of subjectivities in a mobile telephony setting, which, again, may serve as a model of communication services for the communication industry of the near future. Simultaneously, this really confronts us with the fact that contemporary cultural activities also run the risk of exploiting subjectivities. It is difficult to produce an autonomous product without being capitalized. Today, "[t]he conditions for economic production, artistic creation, and political action have entered into a zone of indifference where they appear linked through a series of reciprocal presuppositions" (Lazzarato 2005). Once you liberate something—identity, race, sexuality, class—it immediately and easily becomes a model for a market, instead of remaining a power of criticism. Here it can be seen that multiple subjectivities, commodified as parts of production, are contesting and questioning spaces of criticism by means of its ephemeral standing position; that is, they are strongly coinciding with the logic of capitalism.

THE "HIDDEN HOMELESS"

Another example of a specific "mode of being" attributed to mobile telephony and capitalism can be seen in a contemporary phenomenon in Japan, where the media have taken to speaking of so-called "hidden homeless." This term addresses those impoverished members of society who are rendered invisible, a very contemporary socio-political issue, especially among youth in Japanese society. In March 2007, it was even brought before the National Diet. The hidden homeless are, literally, those who cannot be recognized as homeless by their appearance. Generally, the homeless might be thought to be easily distinguishable by their worn-out clothes and shoes, by the big plastic bags in which they carry their all possessions, and by the cardboard houses they inhabit (rather than "better" housing in a large park), etc. But the hidden homeless do not look different from "normal" people—they are neatly dressed and carry mobile phones or sometimes PCs and portable music devices as well. However, in many cases, they are employed on a day-to-day basis and can certainly not earn enough money to rent a flat. They usually combine different places to stay, such as their friends' flats, or 24-hour spots such as Internet cafes, McDonald's restaurants, and saunas. Because of this, they are also called "Net Cafe Refugees" or "Mac Refugees".

The hidden homeless became particularly noticeable after the Japanese government—under the Koizumi Cabinet—diminished the legal regulations for employers, in order to stimulate the Japanese economy and conspicuously decrease the official number of jobless. At first, it seemed to work—at the surface level of statistics.

According to the next primeminister, Shinzo Abe, 600,000 more people found jobs, and the percentage of jobless fell to less than four percent (Anon. 2007b). However, the government's policy was more beneficial to big corporations and companies. It led to full-time employment being transformed to contract-based work, and even to a large amount of day-to-day employment with no legal insurance whatsoever. Tsuyoshi Inaba, a representative of MOYAI Independent Life Support Center—a non-profit organization working to support the homeless—warned about the changes among the homeless as early as 2004, when he said in an interview: “The overall situation is becoming more complicated. 10 years ago most of the homeless people were day-laborers, construction workers. Now people who have worked at different kinds of jobs became homeless. Some of them are young people” (Read 2004). According to a survey report by the Ministry of Health and Welfare (2007), compiled following an urgent request from the National Diet, there were 5,400 hidden homeless in August, 2007. 26.5% were in their 20s, and 23.1% were in their 50s. It is assumed that the actual figures are higher still.

Having no fixed address has effects on many levels of life, but it also makes the mobile telephone more important in the pursuit temporary solutions. For example, almost all job arrangements made by the hidden homeless—search, offer, confirmation—are done by mobile phone. The hidden homeless also use mobile phones for reporting their arrival at a meeting point. For them, the mobile phone guarantees availability to the market, but they have learned to see that this availability spells dependency more than freedom, for, simultaneously, they are managed by the capitalist rationale that is “embodied” in the mobile gadget.

It is not so long ago that the functionality of the “mobile office” or the portable home/living room (Kopomaa 2000; Bull 2000 and 2004; Fujimoto 2003) was seen as an important part of the capabilities of such portable gadgets, in an extension of the concept of “mobile privatization” proposed, for instance, by Raymond Williams (1974). However, a vision such as this is too simple, too naïve, to describe with any precision the reality of post-Fordist capitalism and labor. The negative symptoms associated with mobile telephony are deeply rooted within its very own reproductive nature. Once it is acknowledged that the hidden homeless can be expected to carry their own mobile phones, a great number of social and economic transactions are performed exclusively through the network of mobile telephony. These include automatically initiated cycles, which introduce differences or hierarchies among the homeless according to whether or not they have a mobile phone. The hidden homeless also become a new marketing target for venture businesses. The fact that they cannot vote without having a physical address is continually ignored within the political sphere, but extreme capitalist solutions react quickly enough, with the emergence of “new business[es] for the poor”. These new industries—such as one-night residences for the homeless, 24-hour manga/Internet cafes, real estate agencies dealing in low-rent properties requiring no deposit, and

others—rely on the existence and the functioning of a BOP (Bottom of the Pyramid) in society. They grow with the population of the poor.

Such camouflaged social venture businesses exactly fit the area that the government used to address with social welfare. Cynically enough, the hidden homeless are those who are excluded from capitalist society, and then re-included—but as consumers. In this endless cycle, the mobile phone is playing a significant role, much more than just a gadget associated with the sweet talk of “connectivity” or “ubiquitous communication”. Mobile connectivity can be twisted to open another social dimension altogether. The more the mobile phone is considered an essential tool, the more the flow of information exchange through the mobile phone plays a key part in sustaining the new conditions. Here again, the mobile telecommunication service is an industry that both supports and benefits from such users. The distinction between them is quite ambivalent.

MOBILE TELEPHONE CONNECTIVITY

The phenomena described above, performed and enacted in the context of mobile telephony, arguably form a different configuration in processes producing modes of being, ultimately forming subjects and leading to mutations in subjectivity. In the case of *Call Cutta*, the availability of the mediated voice (through mobile phones) gives a subject commercial value and makes his/her subjectivity into a commodity. However, the transformation coexists with ambivalent positions of creative activity, and these are more precisely linked through mobile connectivity. For the hidden homeless of Japan, the mobile phone is a necessary device to become, and to remain, available to the market. The two examples are very different, but both phenomena share as a common trait the fact that the mobile phone connects the subject to a mode of being “within” society—it represents the capitalist mode of society and strongly and directly reflects the individual realities in global capitalism. Networks only connect subjects. Behind these subjects, there are the accumulations of past and present politics and economics. This makes it all the more crucial to consider relational aspects of politics and history in contemporary subjectification—the mode of being—in mobile communication.⁵

Call Cutta shows us the fact that mobile telephone connectivity can create a space where an interaction of “human power, knowledge/information and action” can easily be realized. As a result, the interaction inserts a new stratification of reality around those engaging in mobile communications. Simultaneously, the space implies conditions in which multiple and experimental subjectivities can more easily live and play in high mutual dependency and in live sharing. The hidden homeless indicate an extreme cycle of consumerism in global capitalism by creating inseparable ties between the use of the mobile telephony and bare survival. Here, rethinking subjectivity (mode of being) as a consumerist mode of productivity, “subjectivity” as it is used today may at first give one the impression that it is inextricably linked to an activity of nurturing the economic system. Under this line of thought, it can be said that a space created by

mobile telephony tends to materialize all the involved subjectivity/ies as a commodity at different levels. There is no clear line between a symbolic capital and economic capital, social supports and venture capitalism. Individual subjectivities are not only the content of cultures any more, but are also transformed into economic production, which, according to my hypothesis, eventually feeds back subjectivities that have been exhausted and emptied out by capitalism. This process can be reversed into a cycle of production: a mobilized economy feeds subjectivities through the implementation of modes of mobile communication. This can be as pervasive as the technologically enhanced mode of “being in spaces” produced through individual and collective uses of digital mobile communication.

ENDNOTES

- ¹The Invisible Landscapes is a series of mobile phone art projects which I curated. It started in Malmö Konstmuseum and Rooseum Center for Contemporary art, Malmö, Sweden, in 2003. It was further developed at the Gallery of Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 2005, and Lund Konsthall in Lund, Sweden, in 2006. For further details, please consult www.invisible-landscapes.net.
- ²Here I do not use the notion as a military position, but in a sense of Spivak’s notion in postcolonial theory.
- ³There are a number of mobile phone projects that were situated in city spaces in order to facilitate the experience of a mixture of real and virtual components, combining the use of different media—public telephones, internet/webcams, mobile phones with GPS technology, Bluetooth. For instance, *Ima Hima* (Prix Ars Electronica, 1999) by Neeraj Jhanji, was a “located” information service, indicating friends nearby, the nearest restaurants and shops or the exact address of the spot where the mobile phone carrier stands. Some other uses of locative media projects are a Bluetooth tour in Mölndal, Sweden (2002); *Can you see me now?* (Prix Ars Electronica, 2003); and *Uncle Roy All Around You* (2004) and *I Like Frank* (2005) by Blast Theory and others.
- ⁴As one of the positive examples, Rotkirch found that, as a collateral effect of the globalized movement of labor, mobile phones contribute to migrants being able to maintain distant relationships with their homelands. They have also helped them to establish and develop a network within their own social circle under aggravated language and living conditions. There exist other similar cases where the device has helped to build a network within specific groups of people.
- ⁵At the end of the fifty minutes of the mobile phone-guided tour, the two subjects are emancipated from invisibility by way of a mutual webcam, effecting what might be seen as a typical residue of theatrical modes of representation. The visual representations of the two conversation partners were revealed—to the Calcutta resident, in her usual working environment, and to the Berlin resident, by a monitor in the storefront window of a computer shop inside a shopping mall—the final point on the tour. The project experimented with an emphasis on temporary, ambulant forms of network existence (at least for the guided person), as well as on the power of voice, which connected the two subjects over a distance of 15,000 miles. However, this ending most of all confirms the significance of the materiality of communication.

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