

New IO? Interaction in the networked city

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<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/new-interaction/>

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Introduction

This is a written version of the presentation at the workshop 'New IO? Interaction in the networked city' at Futureeverything. The workshop was about 'the new interaction order' – the idea that behaviour in public places is changing with the emergence of the networked city (Graham and Marvin 2001, Greenfield 2009). People are experimenting with new technologies in everyday practice, and at other levels, including security and intelligent transport solutions. How is interaction changing? What are opportunities? Challenges? Risks?

Some Background

Many analysts (e.g. Simmel 1903, Zukin 1998, Graham and Marvin 2001, Greenfield 2009) argue that the serendipity and diversity of urban encounters are key to what makes cities 'human'. It is in encounters with diverse others that understanding and

curiosity for ‘the other’ is generated. Democratic politics depends on appreciation for diversity. New technologies – from social networking technologies to mobile phones, ambient screens, GPS and ubiquitous connectivity – make it possible to connect people to people they already know, or who know someone they already know (a ‘friend of a friend’), overlaying cities globally with networks of people who connect – more than before – with people who are ‘the same’ as them (e.g. McPherson et al 2001).

Much of the debate around this is focused on whether this is a good thing, with some analysts observing that ‘real interaction’ is ‘better’, precisely because it encourages serendipity and engagement with different people. However, it is very important to ask ‘why’ and ‘how’ serendipity and encountering others who are different make us human and what we might mean by ‘human’. It is, of course, beyond the scope of this presentation to answer these questions, but we wish to discuss them.

This workshop

- Introductions
- Some background (15–20 min):
 - Baseline: Goffman’s IO
 - Key changes & Consequences
 - ??? ... A closer look
 - New Interaction Order project
- Collaborative analysis
- Where do we go from here?

interaction ‘order’?

- serendipity/diversity \leftrightarrow humanity
- **why? how?**
- a domain of sociological inquiry
- generative of social order
 - a set of practices, procedures and principles
- transformation
- **why? how? which way? what’s good? what’s not?**

Goffman was one of several seminal theorists to address these question, some 50 years ago. In his 1963 study of ‘Behaviour in public places’, he outlines what he later called the ‘interaction order’ (1983).

Why ‘order’? It doesn’t mean rank and file military order or the order of synchronised swimming contest. For Goffman the interaction order is an order in the sense of a logical domain of analysis. Although public behaviour may sometimes look chaotic or actually be riotous – for example a fight between Man U and Chelsea fans, or a political protest – in all its forms, chaotic or orderly, it is actually socially organised (see also Blumer 1951). Indeed, interaction is generative of social order. We’ll show you examples of the kinds of practices, procedures, principles of this.

What’s important to discuss is that there are **transformations**. So it’s not just a question of whether ‘real’ or ‘virtual’ connecting practices are better. It’s a matter of finding out **how** they are intermingling and, how, in the process, practices, procedures, methods are transforming social order. Why is this happening? How? Which way are we going with these transformations and what’s good, what’s bad about it? What is amenable for ‘design’?



Manchester 1970 <http://4evrmanchester.blogspot.com/2008/11/urban-life.html>

Copresence renders persons **uniquely accessible**, available, and subject to one another. **Public order** ... has to do with the normative regulation of this accessibility.

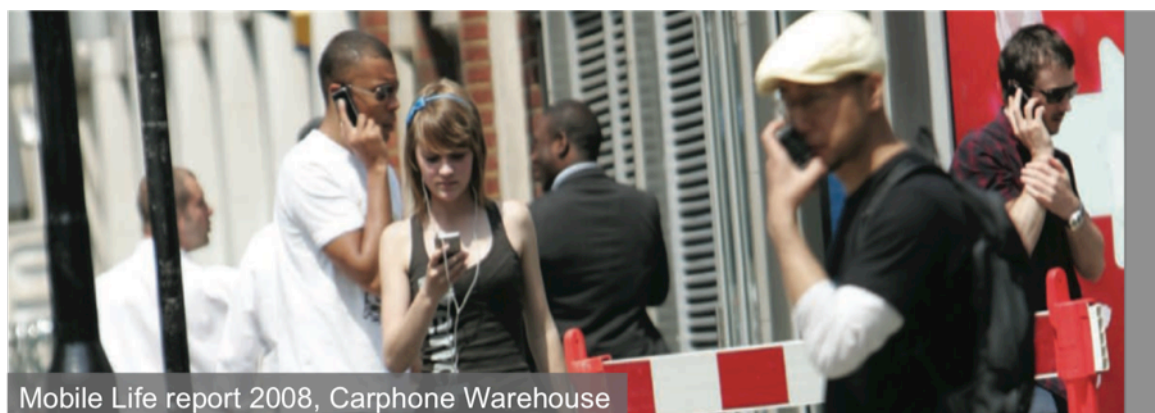
(Goffman *Behaviour in public places* 1963, p. 22)

We are fascinated with how, over 50 years or so, the interaction order has changed. One of the key elements Goffman observed was how copresence made people accessible and available to each other, and how this carries a moral obligation for involvement.



Glasgow Buchanan Street 1970

So when you were out in public in the 1970s you were obliged to make contact with others. This has – arguably – changed.¹

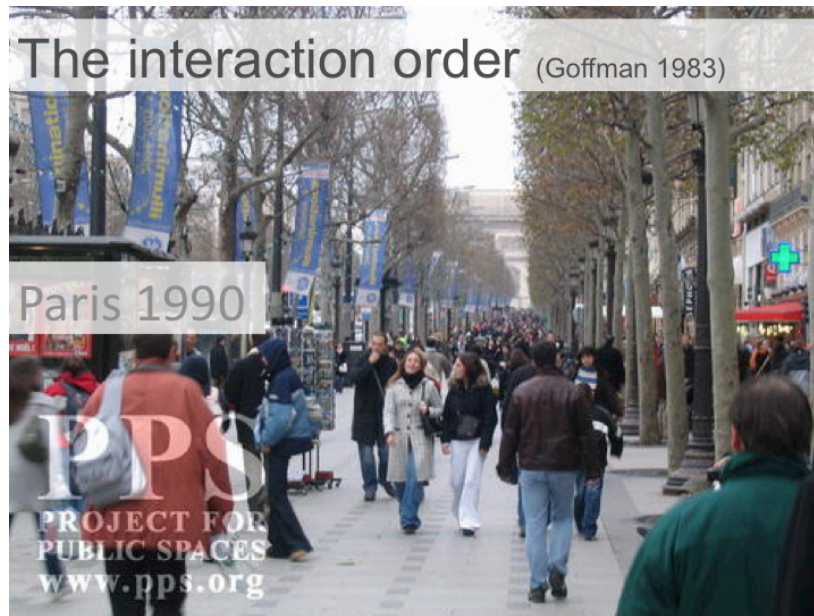


Mobile Life report 2008, Carphone Warehouse

¹ We are aware that there is a tendency to ‘romanticize’ the reality of urban encounters in the past. This was discussed at the workshop, too. A historical perspective is needed. If you know of relevant studies we’d be grateful to hear.

New technologies like mobile phones, public screens, ubiquitous connectivity, GPS, new architecture, new policies and new social practices have changed how people are involved in co-presence. Some analysts argue that there have been radical changes that deeply interact with political practices and possibilities – for good & ill.

20 years ago, the interaction order manifested something like this.



You see people walking in ‘ambulatory units’, that is, visibly alone or together and visibly going somewhere in ways that allows others to know where they’re going, and avoid collisions. When you consider the diversity of motives and attractions available here, it’s amazing that people don’t bump into each other. How do they do that?



One aspect of the orderliness of conduct in public is that it has scenic intelligibility – people treat appearances ‘as “the document of,” as “standing on behalf of” a presupposed pattern (Mannheim, in Garfinkel 1967). This allows us to identify at a glance situations like students streaming out of a lecture theatre, a conversation in

the corridor, a game, which looks different from group conversations in the same square, and it allows us to dynamically fit our own actions into or around these scenes.



Normally, Goffman observes, this is facilitated by civil inattention, that is, we look at people, but we don't stare. When I took that picture I broke that rule – staring with a camera - and the students look at me puzzled.

Goffman captures civil inattention like this: 'one gives to another enough visual notice to demonstrate that one appreciates that the other is present, while at the next moment withdrawing one's attention from him so as to express that he doesn't constitute a target of special curiosity ... ' (Goffman 1963, p. 84)

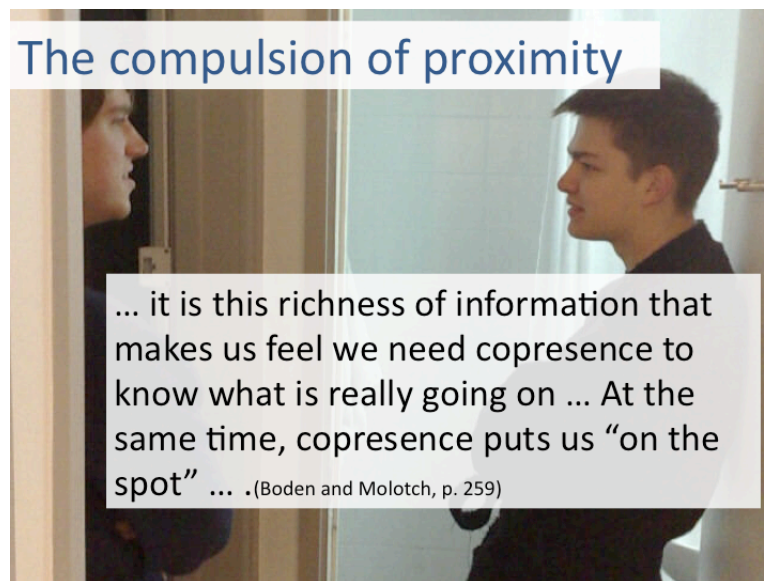
Taking photographs here is odd. It is unclear what my photographic curiosity is about – it could be the building, students generally, for example for a website, it could be **them**, specifically, which would require explanation.

A lot can be done by modulating civil inattention. For example, without a camera, a breach of civil inattention could indicate a cry for help, disapproval, hostility or ... more benign things like flirting. This is all difficult to catch ethnographically, but we've found an example in a music video, ...



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zx3m4e45bTo>

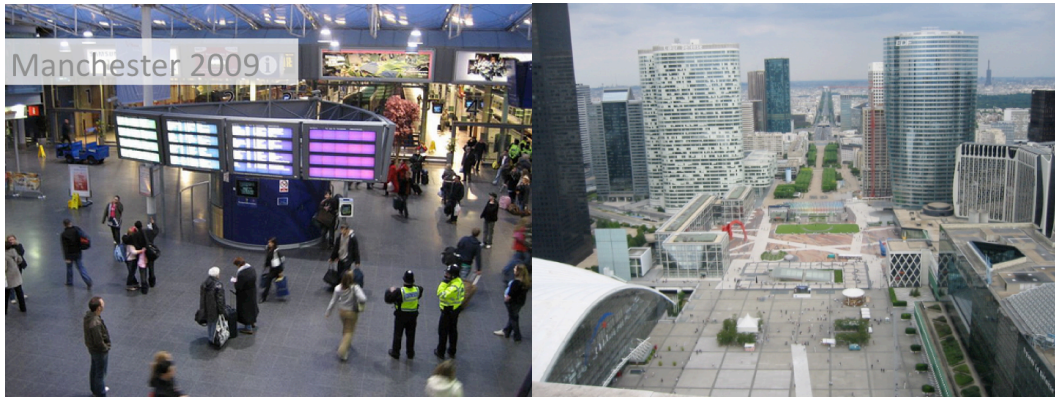
What a glance is or becomes depends on the whole situation – facial expressions, what people do before and after. This complex, reflexive unfolding of meaning in interaction makes for a ‘compulsion of proximity’ (Boden and Molotch 1994).



To really understand what someone else is made of, or what’s going on, people need to be co-present. This is no easy situation to be in, as it also makes us available and subject to others in ways we can’t control. People blush, they say stupid things they later regret, they unwittingly disclose dishonesty or selfish intentions, and so on. Co-presence puts us on the spot.

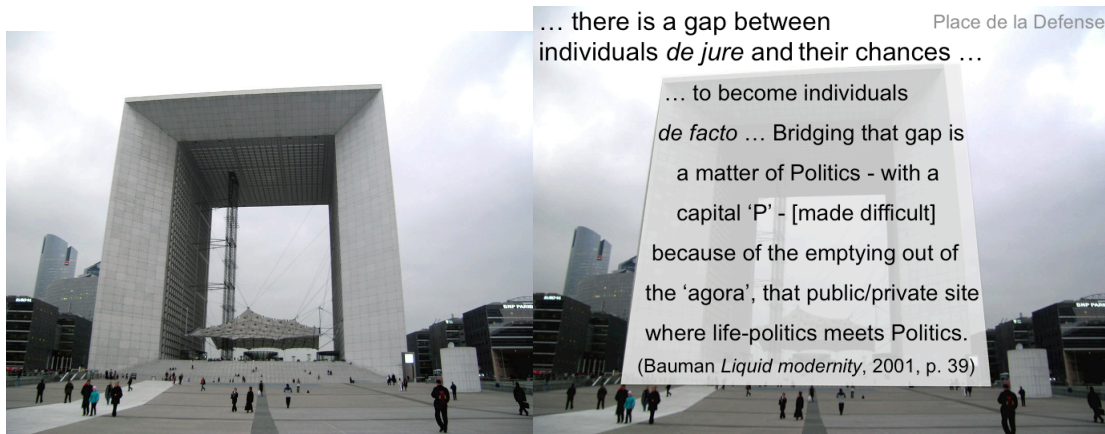
However, through **being with others on the spot**, people actively generate and maintain trust, strong emotional bonds, respect for diversity, dreams and shared ambitions. Trust is not a psychological state individuals mysteriously, intuitively feel towards some people and not others. It is a judgement **made** over and over, precognitively, based on how others modulate principles like scenic intelligibility, civil inattention, and the sequential organisation of interaction with consideration towards you. So, if someone states a desire to hear your opinion but continuously interrupts you to tell you theirs, trust does not develop easily.

On a larger city and citizen scale, critics like Jane Jacobs, Sharon Zukin and Zygmund Bauman argue that the production of trust, community, and **civility** is undermined by consumerism, privatization of public spaces, individualist neoliberal ideologies, and the creeping securitization of everyday life, amongst other things.



Reflecting on a visit to the place de la Defense in Paris, Bauman says:

It embodies all the traits of the public, yet emphatically **not 'civil'** urban space. What strikes the visitor is the inhospitality of the place: everything within sight inspires awe, but discourages staying. The fantastically shaped buildings are meant to be looked **at**, not [entered]. Wrapped from top to bottom in reflective glass, they seem to have no windows no entry doors ... These fortresses are **in** the place but not **of** it – and they prompt everyone lost in the flat vastness of the square to feel likewise.



For Bauman the place de la defense is an iconic manifestation of the emptying out of public space that has contributed to an erosion of civility and capital P politics. As citizens are increasingly told and conceive of themselves as individuals *de jure* – that is, as individuals **by right** in democratic societies, each in control of and responsible for, their own life choices – they lose the capability to understand problems and opportunities as systemic.

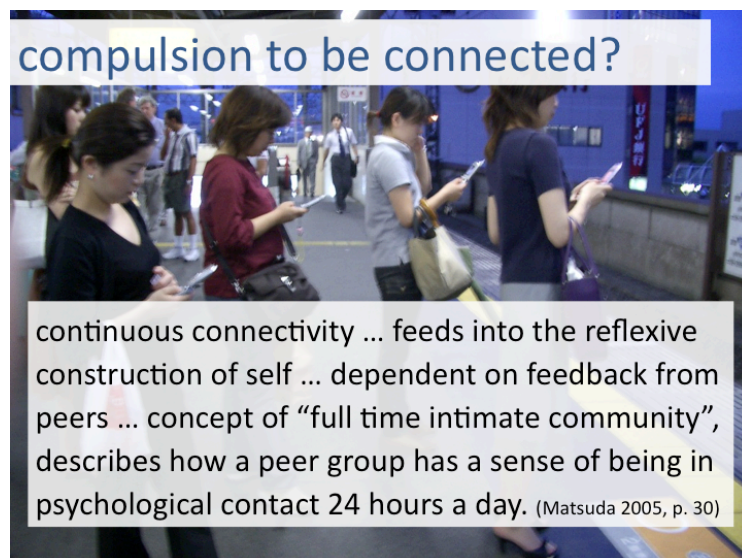
Individualization, Bauman argues, makes it impossible for people to become individuals *de facto*, that is, with **real opportunities** for a good life.

Individualist forms of life make people see risks and opportunities as biographical, they blind them to systemic contradictions, disabling a capital P politics that would address systemic causes, in favour of what Jane Jacobs calls Dark Age politics – that

is, short sighted managerial politics, addicted to popularity, oriented towards pleasing electorates and deep pocketed interests rather than considering the greater and long-term good, lacking political courage for unpopular decisions.



The evolution of the interaction order seems to chime with this. ...The compulsion of proximity – seems to be transmuting into a compulsion to be connected. People highly value the asynchronous nature of mediated communication, and the ability to micro-coordinate with significant others on the move, ... at the price of ignoring those nearby.



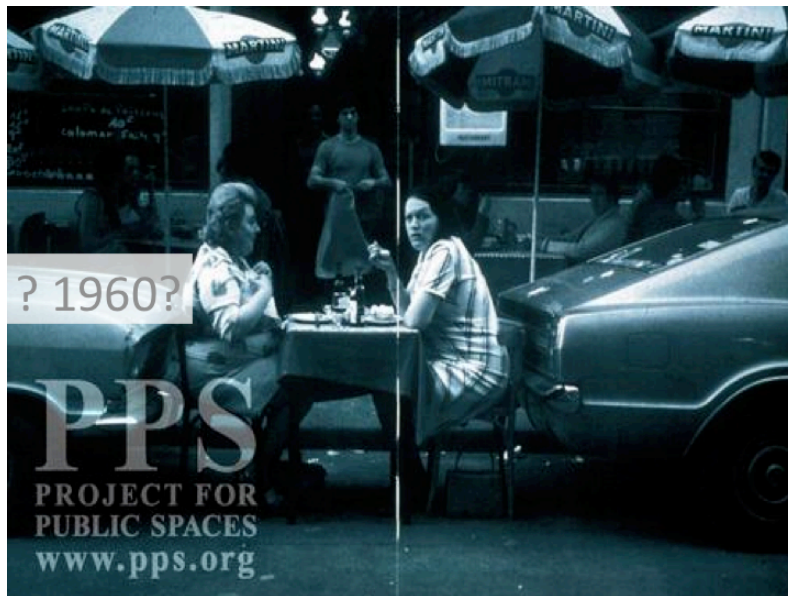
Over less than 20 years the character of public spaces has changed dramatically, with some people apparently retreating into mediated ‘full time intimate communities’ that provide 24/7 – often very lightweight - contact with distant others

In the past, public space could be an agora – a space where, as Bauman says, life-politics met capital P politics. A somewhat romanticised view of how people would talk to strangers, exchange life stories and engage in discussions about current affairs.



Today, many people are said to enact what Raymond Williams called ‘**mobile privatization**’. People retreat from public spaces - into **digital bubbles** created with laptops, mobile phones, ipods (see also Bull 2007).

Rather than acknowledge and scrutinize others with curiosity, ...



... people seem to be insulating themselves against contact in co-present situations




While, of course, seeking association with distant others, which has been theorized through social network graphs like the 'star' above, identifying a guy sitting like a beggar on the street as a sociometric star – someone with many followers on twitter, for example, lots of links made to him, only a few mutual ones

This disrupts another important interaction order principle.

Without technological extensions, people can put themselves in other people's shoes. These two women can know what the photographer is capturing ... because we have what Alfred Schuetz calls **reciprocity of perspective**.

People actually see the world differently – literally, because I'm 'here' and you are 'there', you see something quite different from what I see, which is also true physiologically (short sighted), biographically, socially and culturally.

But in the natural attitude of everyday life we take for granted that other people know the world more or less like us – that is, literally (the street, the things in it) but also socially (as in the codes of conference talks, of 1960s summer streetlife). This, we do by collectively working with two idealizations. First, we assume that our standpoints are interchangeable. If I changed places with you – physically, socially, culturally or biographically – your 'here' would become mine and I would be able to see things from your perspective. Then, unless there is counter evidence, we assume that the differences between our perspectives are irrelevant for the purposes at hand – so we can do conference talks, even though the world looks different for us.



reciprocity of perspective

Alfred Schutz (1970) *On phenomenology and social relations*, p. 183:

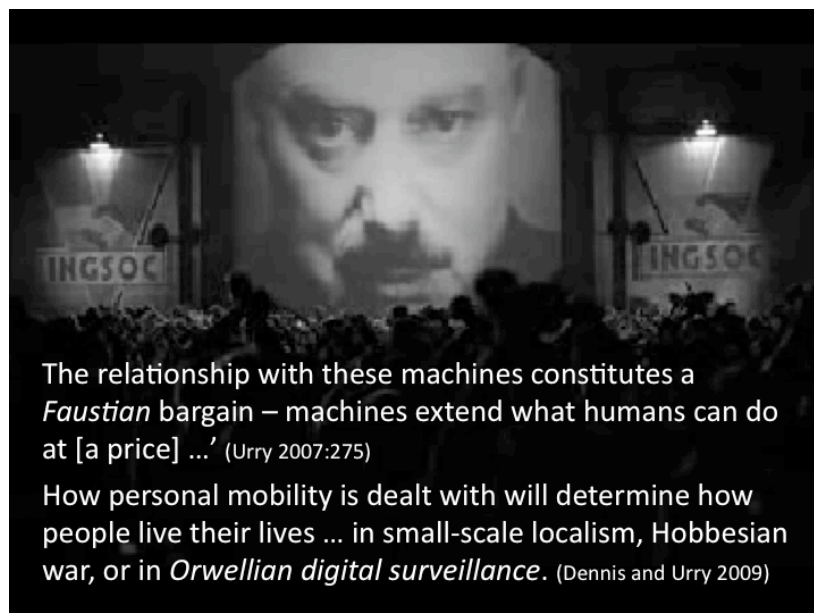
- (i) ... if I change places with him so that his "here" becomes mine, I would see things in the same typicality as he does; ...
- (ii) ... Until counter-evidence I take it for granted – and assume my fellowman does the same - that the differences in perspectives ... are irrelevant for the purposes at hand.



Use of mobile technologies undermines reciprocity of perspective, because each of these people is in a focused encounter with another that's invisible to us. You can't put yourself into their 'here', because part of their here is in virtual spaces you cannot sense.

At the same time, morally, they are not involved, and they may be making available things that others find annoying – like loud talk, private detail.

And they are also making things available that some distant others might find useful – such as their location and their conversations.



John Urry and Kingsley Dennis argue that this could enable mobile surveillance on an unprecedented scale, constituting a Faustian bargain, with possibilities for Orwellian digital surveillance.

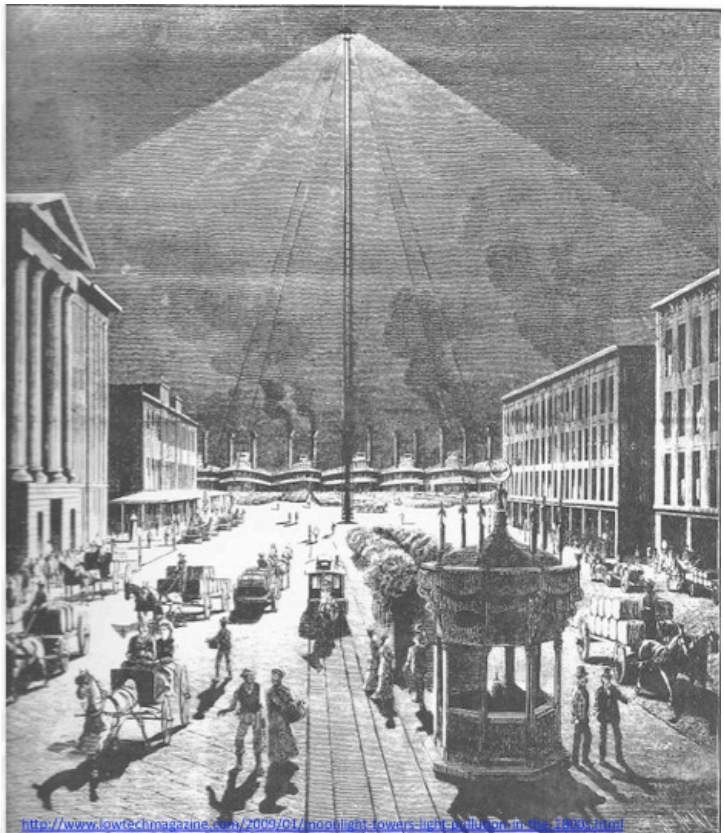


Jacobs, Zukin, Bauman, Urry, could be only half right .

However, by abstracting and reifying things, and by neglecting to pay attention to resistance, theory misses important critical opportunities.

Take surveillance. It is not the first time that societies are experiencing a revolution in surveillance.

No illusion is possible in this light. ... It permits total surveillance by the state. The utopian dream of nights lit up as bright as day was transformed into the nightmare of light from which there was no escape. (Schivelbusch 1995 [1988], p. 134)

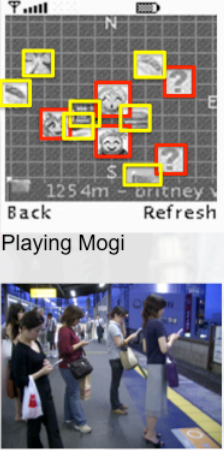


<http://www.lowtechmagazine.com/2009/09/nighttime-lowtech-illustration-the-city-as-it-was/>

One contemporary says: this light permits total surveillance. The utopian dream of nights lit up was transformed into a nightmare of light from which there was no escape.

People are experiencing something similar now, but they are not passive in the process.

(sweat) we are very close ...



The image shows a screenshot of a mobile phone screen on the left, displaying a map with several yellow and red markers. Below the map, it says "1254m - britney v", "Back", "Refresh", and "Playing Mogi". To the right is a transcript of a text conversation between two players, A and B, with timestamps and Japanese text. The transcript includes English translations and interpretations of the Japanese text and emojis used.

1.A. (20:19:38): 今晚、 近いね
this evening, (surprised smiley) we are very close aren't we?

2. B. (20:22:55): うわ 近い |
Waah! (sweat)! we are close (tired smiley)

3. A. (20:24:53): 逃げられたー |
you ran away ((3 disappointed smileys))

4. B. (20:27:14): 違うよ 丸の内線に乗ったから |
no ((sweat)) it is because I got on the Marunouchi line
((happy smiley))

Licoppe (2009) Recognizing mutual „proximity“. *Journal of Pragmatics*.

This is a screenshot and a transcript of a texted conversation between two Mogi players. Mogi is an augmented reality treasure hunt game – people move through cities with their GPS enabled phones, collecting virtual treasures. There are 1000nds of players all over Japan.

Without any explicit design intention behind it, the game displays other players on your screen. These are people you don't know, all you have in common is you both play Mogi. The screen covers an area like a small town, say, which means that if people can see other Mogi players on their screen, they are physically close

When you are close and know it, and you have something in common, it suggests that you could meet physically.

Christian Licoppe studies the elaborate negotiations people engage in to avoid face to face meetings. Later on in this text conversation, B says 'maybe one wishes to run when one gets so close'. Clearly, the idea of physically meeting up with virtual acquaintances provokes anxiety.

What this illustrates – amongst other things – is how people are, through trial and error, adjusting to digital 'shadows'. People are learning how, when they use digital technologies they are present in different spaces, and leave traces. New kinds of social interactions and new interaction order principles are emerging – you could call this **virtual civil inattention**, which, with the right critical support, might also evolve into new sensitivities around surveillance.

(sweat) we are very close ...



There are parallels to how, when electric light was introduced, people got used to shadows. People are extending their sense of embodiment. We are also drawing on phenomenological ideas of 'extending' or transforming the human sensorium here, including (Merleau Ponty 1962, McLuhan 1964, Garfinkel 2002, Thrift 2008).

This is full of potential for constructive change. Unfortunately, technologies are currently not designed to support this social innovation. On the contrary. Most design philosophies are about making technologies invisible. This is one area where sociological analysis could make a big difference (e.g. Buscher and Mogensen 2009).

Some further examples of transformation:

Crisis informatics

Example Crisis informatics: 'I'm OK at VT'

```
Meta M. (City) wrote
at 00:08 on 4/17
~list of 16 names~
Total list so far: 16

Mike T. (Virginia Tech) wrote
at 00:09 on 4/17
Re as reported by another facebook group.

David A. (Non-VT University) wrote
at 00:10 on 4/17
It's 17:
~list of 17 names~

Jose M. (Non-VT University) wrote
at 00:15 on 4/17
18 now:
JB
KD
RL
RC
LS
EM
GL
JD
MT
RS
RR
LL
JL
DP
CB
SB
ML
RA?
```

... an example of *collective intelligence* where a large, distributed group of people exhibited problem-solving capabilities. Though a subset of these problem solvers leveraged the social dissemination of information in a directed fashion, the distributed activity is best understood as being emergent and collective rather than orchestrated. (Vieweg et al. 2008)

Smartmobs (see also Lan et al forthcoming)



Madrid 2004 - 11.4 million people joined unplanned demonstrations to protest against the Spanish government's conclusion that ETA was to blame for Madrid bombings. (thanks to Lucy Suchman, see also Meso Ayeldi, K. (2004))

Collective intelligence



Collective intelligence?

collective intelligence???

... I was one of four puppet masters designing the live missions ... The gamers exercise of free will has long been assumed to be a core aspect of gaming. But the rise of the puppet master suggests that in the new computing landscape, many gamers want precisely the opposite ... (McGonigal 2006).



We are just starting a 16 month pilot project to trace continuities and discontinuities in the interaction order. We will do an ethnographic study in Manchester – looking at the IO from above, from on the ground, from the dark, night and day, we'll be studying new phenomena like Glonet, smartmobs and collective intelligence.

The new interaction order



a study of behaviour in public places

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The New Interaction Order



This pilot project studies the 'new' interaction order from different empirical and analytical perspectives. Drawing on sociology, ethnomethodology, criminology, geography, and design, we are carrying out studies of 'behaviour in public places' in Manchester.

We will explore the interaction order as a phenomenon in flux – produced in and through everyday interactions. There will be a short intensive period of interdisciplinary ethnographic fieldwork in Manchester. Day and night we will be observing behaviour in public places as it unfolds, from above and from on the ground, before and during the *Future Everything* festival – an experimental 'living lab' that seeks to bring technologically rich futures into the present by integrating prototypes into the urban fabric and engaging the public in playful and critical exploration.

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<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/new-interaction/>

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