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On the social implications of Network Locality:

Sociability, privacy, surveillance, and exclusion



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Outline

1. Research framework
2. Theoretical framework: Network locality
3. Media discourses on location aware media
4. Social implications: privacy, surveillance, exclusion, sociability

Research framework

Digital communication interfaces :: public spaces

2 trends



Research framework

Mobile technology appropriation among low-income communities in Brazil





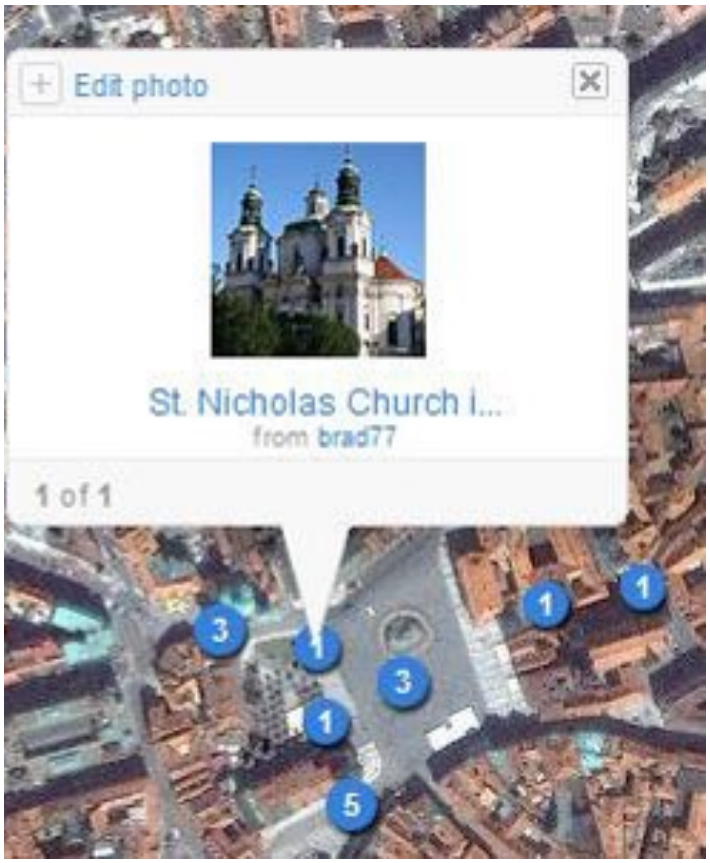
Research framework

Location aware mobile technologies: social / spatial implications









Network Locality

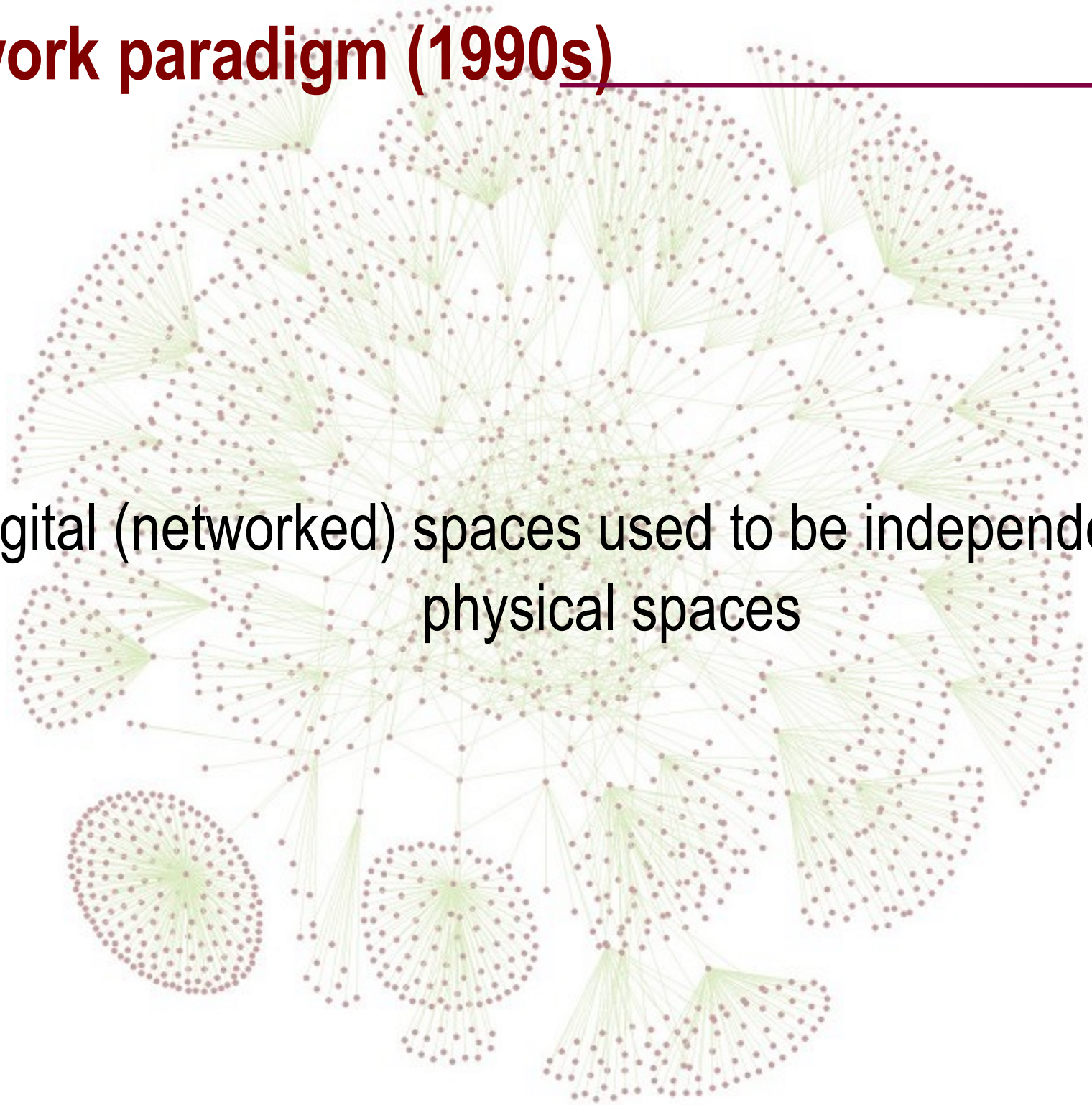


Shift in the way we understand the Internet



Location = organizational logic of networked interactions

Network paradigm (1990s)



Digital (networked) spaces used to be independent of physical spaces

Network paradigm (1990s)

Internet =

- non-place
- independent from place





social spaces



Network paradigm (1990s)

Myths of Cyberspace (Couclelis):

1. Dissolution of cities (death of geography)
2. Reduced need for mobility
3. Social spaces --> virtual spaces





Network paradigm (1990s)

The Global City (Meyrowitz, Sassen, Canclini, Castells, etc.)





The new mobilities paradigm (2000s)

Mobilties, immobilities, moorings (Urry & Sheller)



The new mobilities paradigm (2000s)

Physical vs. “Virtual” mobilities (Kellerman, Urry)



The new mobilities paradigm (2000s)

Disconnection from public spaces (Puro, Plant, Geser)
Free from place (Wellmann)
Death of public spaces (Hampton)
“absent presence” (Gergen)







The Internet is becoming local



Network Locality

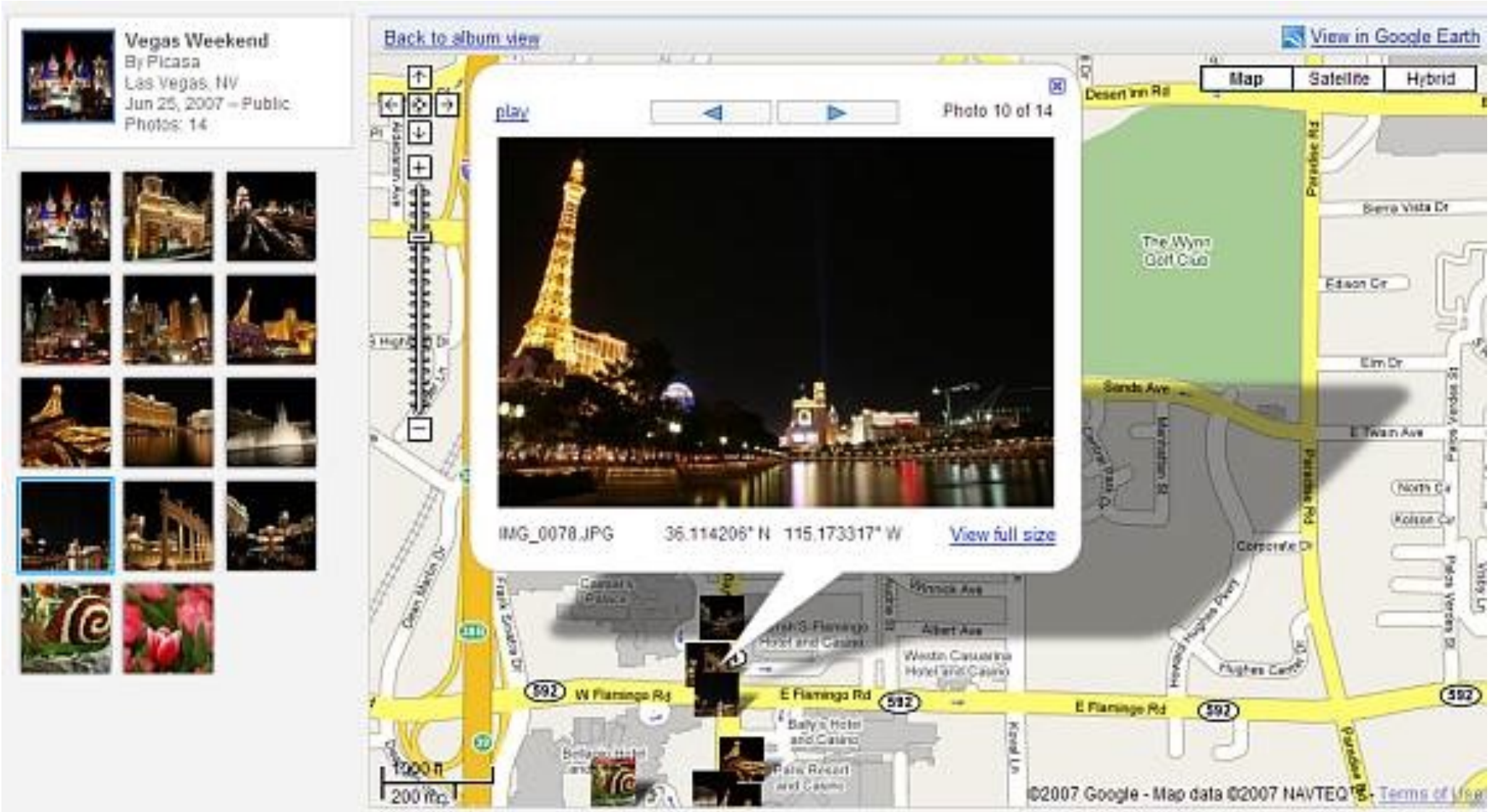
Eric Gordon & Adriana de Souza e Silva

Local = building block of the global (digital networks)
Places = interwined with digital information
Digital + physical (logic of hybrid spaces)



Net-local interfaces

Web composed by local information



Picasaweb, Flickr, Yelp, Outside.in, Google Maps

Net-local interfaces

Geottaging applications, location-based services, augmented reality



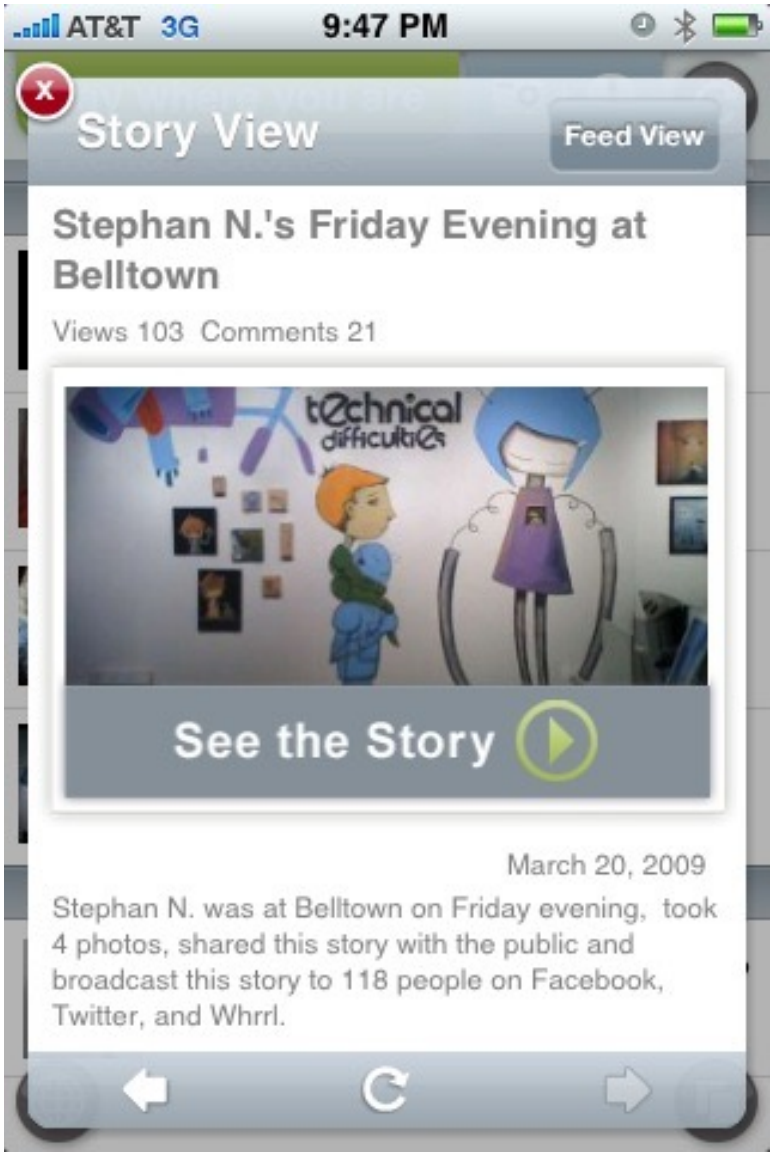


Net-local interfaces

Mapping applications, location-based games, location-based services…

…locative mobile social networks (Loopt, Whrll, Brightkite)





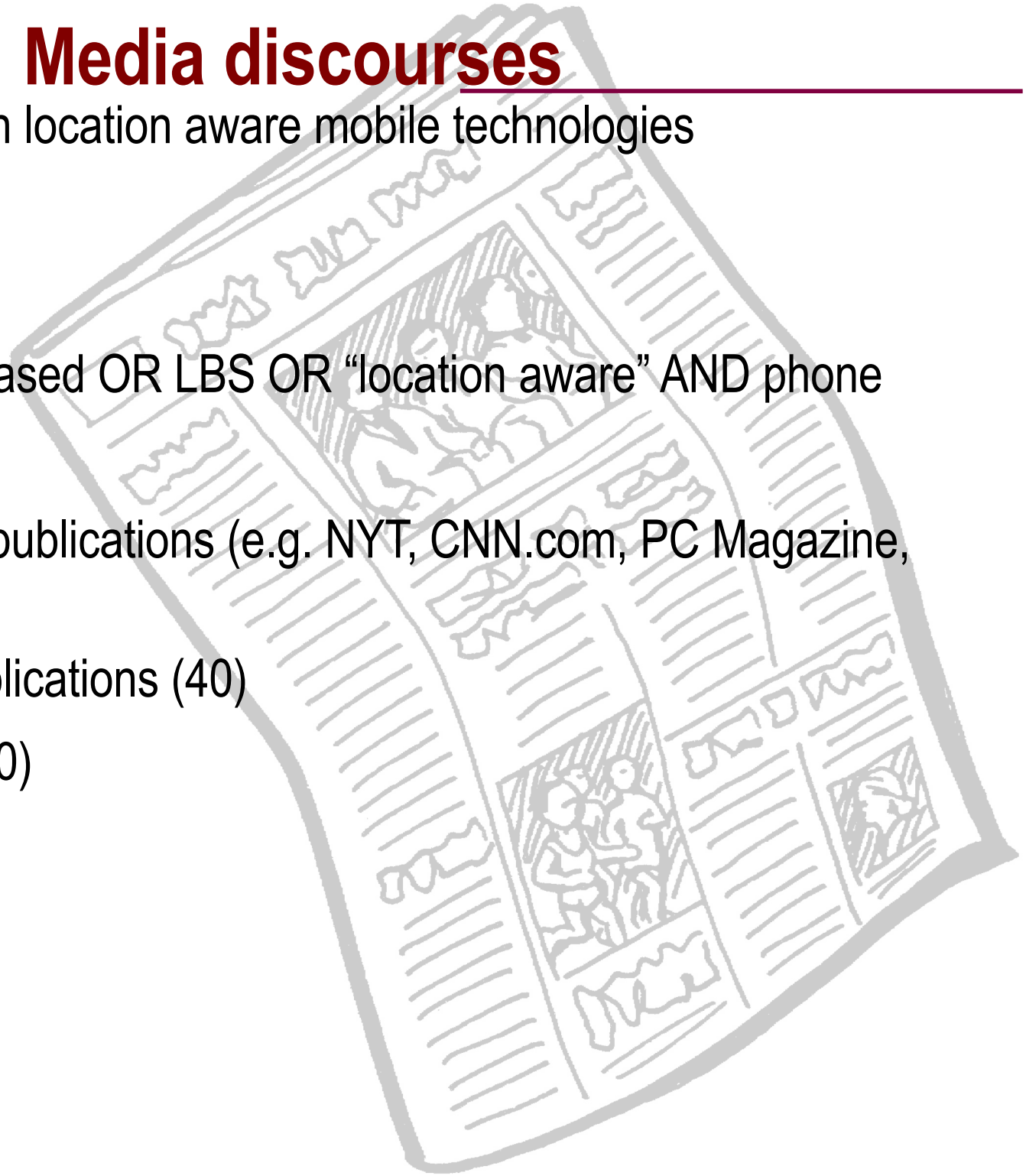
Research Questions

How does network locality and the use of net-local mobile interfaces:

- Change our perception of public spaces?
- Shift the way we interact with each other in public spaces?

Network Locality: Media discourses

Popular press discourses on location aware mobile technologies



- February-May 2009
- LexisNexis: location-based OR LBS OR “location aware” AND phone
- 331 → 83 articles
- Major U.S. and world publications (e.g. NYT, CNN.com, PC Magazine, BusinessWeek, etc.):
  - 11 web-based publications (40)
  - 14 newspapers (30)
  - 6 magazines (13)

Network Locality: Media discourses

Categories: control / personalization, advertising / marketing, privacy, security, tracking /stalking, dating / social networks, navigation

ADVERTISEMENT / MARKETING (LBS)

SOCIAL NETWORKING (LMSN)

SAFETY & SECURITY



Network Locality: Media discourses

Categories: control / personalization, advertising / marketing, privacy, security, tracking /stalking, dating / social networks, navigation

ADVERTISEMENT / MARKETING (LBS)
- Privacy
- Control and personalization

SOCIAL NETWORKING (LMSN)
- Privacy
- Control and personalization

SAFETY & SECURITY
- Privacy
- Control and personalization



Network Locality: Media discourses

Privacy and advertisement (forms of top-down surveillance)

"Privacy experts are warning users to ***make sure they're aware*** *of what it means to sign up"* (CBC News, 02.04)

"People are being told that they are signing up for marketing when in fact they are being opted into a ***massive surveillance strategy****."* (The Guardian, 04.02).

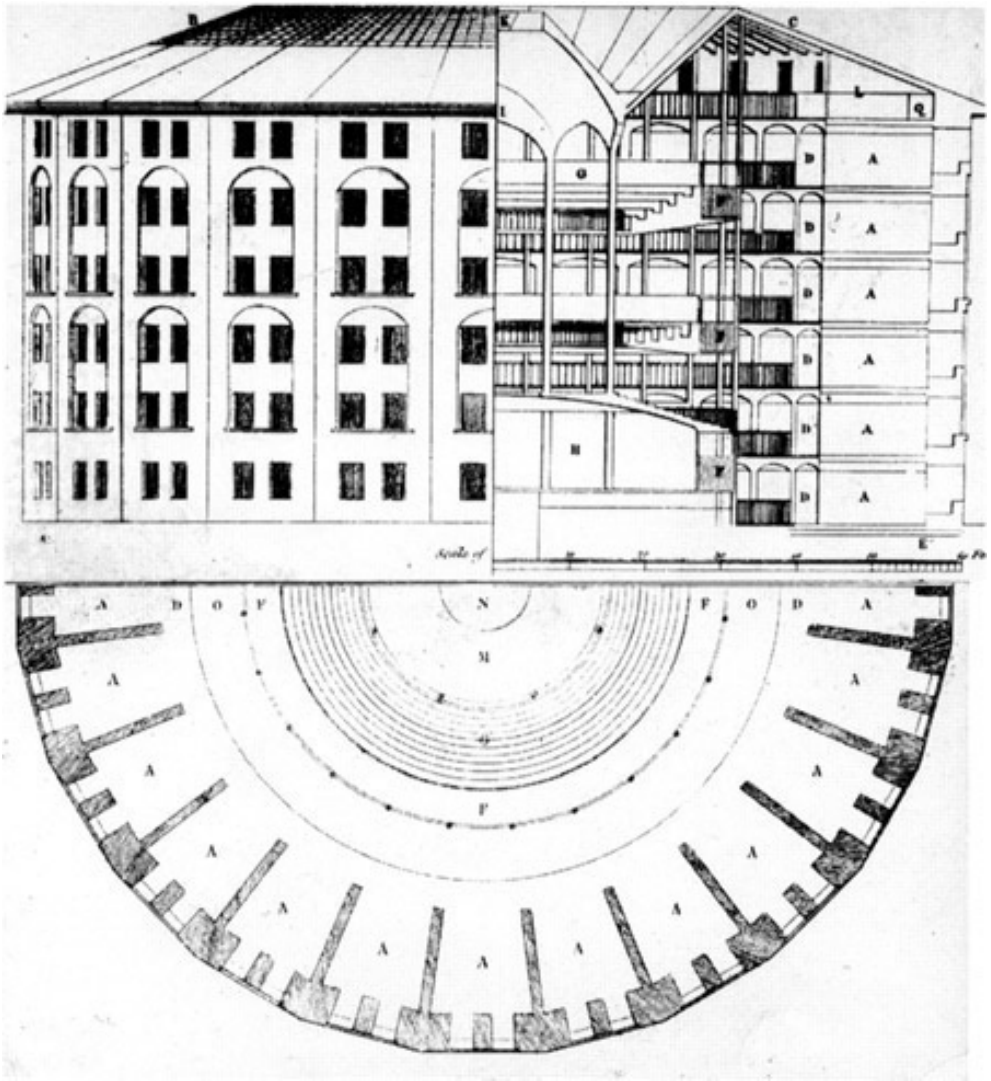


Network Locality: Media discourses

Privacy and advertisement (forms of top-down surveillance)

"A truly Orwellian development that has been described by privacy campaigners as 'a catastrophic corruption of consent'" (The Guardian, 04.02)

"When it comes to government surveillance, the legal interface between law enforcement and your phone and Internet service providers is ***a shadowy place****, and it's often* ***unclear*** *what types of data companies are willing to provide to the government"* (eWeek, 05.05).



Network Locality: Media discourses

Privacy and social networking (forms of co-lateral surveillance)

*"But isn't that still a form of tracking movement that some people could find slightly **creepy**?"* (The Daily Telegraph, 04.28)

*"Let's just imagine that a jealous partner gains access to your unattended phone and enables Latitude **without your knowledge**"* (The Times, 03.28)



Network Locality: Media discourses

Privacy and security

*"These are great services if you're knowledgeable of the tradeoff, if you **understand** what you're giving up to get the service"* (The Globe and Mail, 02.26)

*"**Privacy issues aside**, the service could prove **invaluable** for people traveling alone in unfamiliar areas or dangerous situations"* (CNN.com, 03.11)



Network Locality: Media discourses

Control and advertisement

"Hold up the phone and the screen will have names or business cards floating above the heads of pedestrians, and have advertisement menus appear next to restaurants" (Korea Times, 05.11).

"What this means is in the future, ads will get so contextually relevant that they won't be considered ads, they'll be considered as ***relevant information****"* (eWeek, 02.05).



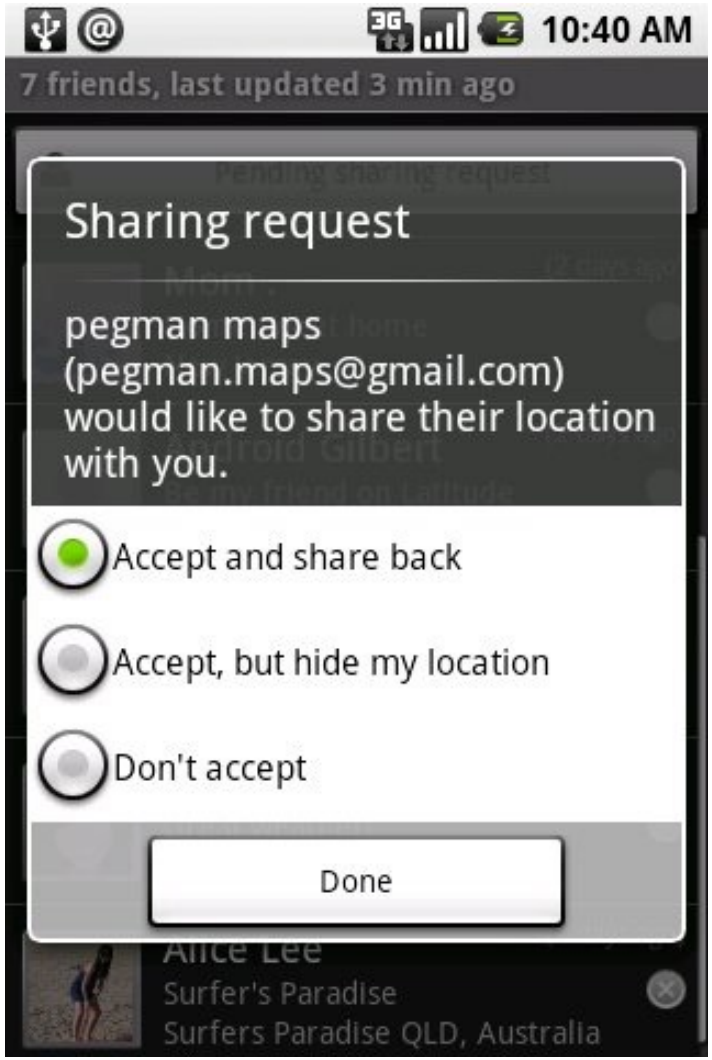
Network Locality: Media discourses

Control and social networking

*"Ensuring all information and updates are **controlled by you**, the subscriber"* (Space Daily, 03.30).

*"Users can also hide their information, turn the service off temporarily or **lie about their location** by setting it manually"* (CBC News, 02.04).

*"With new software like Google Latitude, which allows you to see where your friends are in relation to your location, expect the emphasis to shift towards localised services, becoming **more connected to the people and places** around you."* (The Daily Telegraph, 02.21).



Network Locality: Social Implications

Network Locality: Social Implications

Surveillance?

Are these applications normalizing a surveillance culture or making us more aware of the existing surveillance mechanisms exerted by government and corporations?

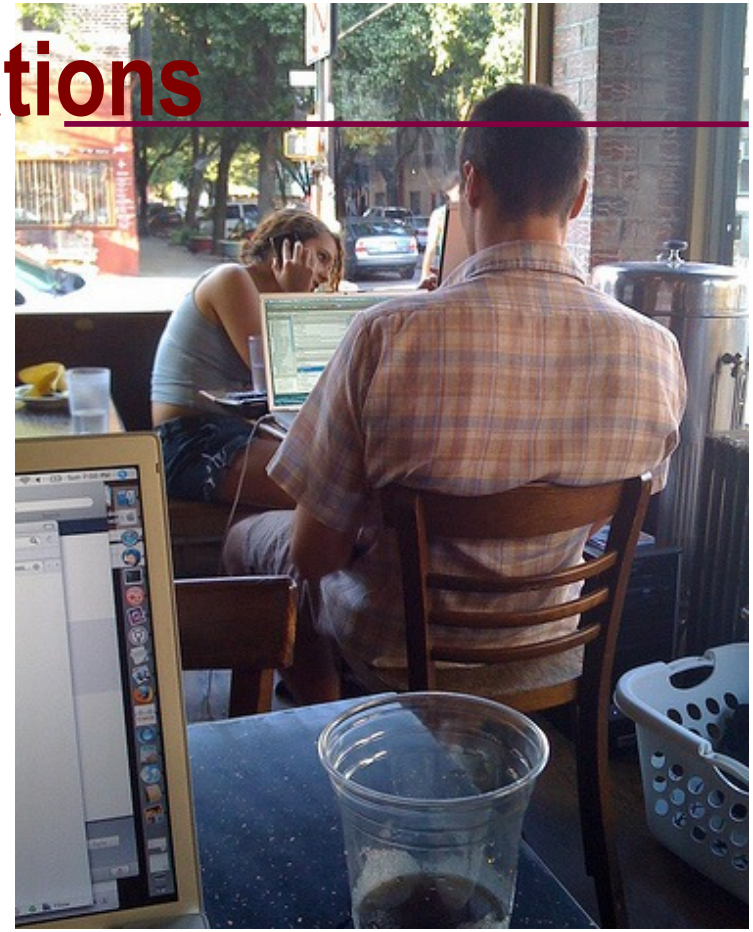
Sousveillance (Mann); Societies of control (Deuleuze)

Network Locality: Social Implications

Privacy?

"If you're not nitpicky about your privacy (which is such a 20th century ideal, anyway), the potential is huge" (The Globe and Mail, 04.24).

"A full-blown map-based, location-aware mobile world would entail rethinking basic American notions of privacy" (New York Times, 02.17).



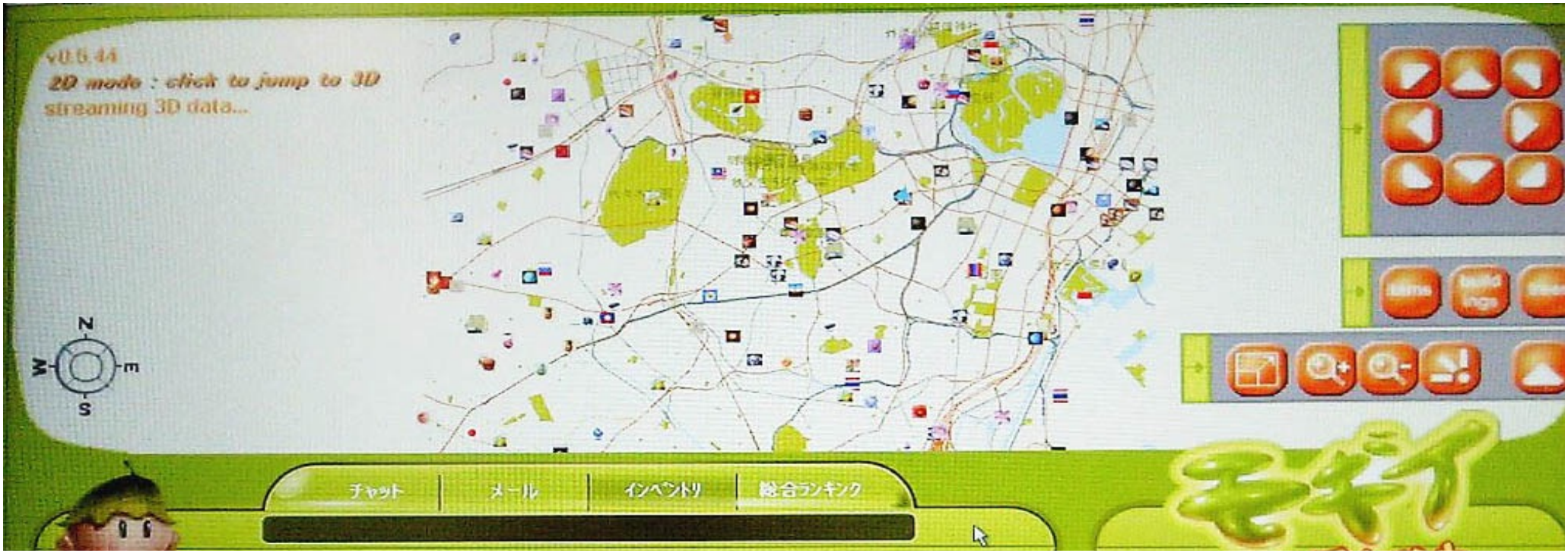


Network Locality: Social Implications

Privacy?

Public character of location (Licoppe & Inada)

Right to be left alone → control over public spaces



Network Locality: Social Implications

Personalization and exclusion





Will certain groups be excluded from interacting with others in public spaces due to the location aware filter on mobile devices?

Network Locality: Social Implications

Personalization and exclusion

How are public spaces being transformed by what we call net-local interfaces?

Differential mobility (Wood & Graham, 2006) → Differential space

Network Locality: Sociability

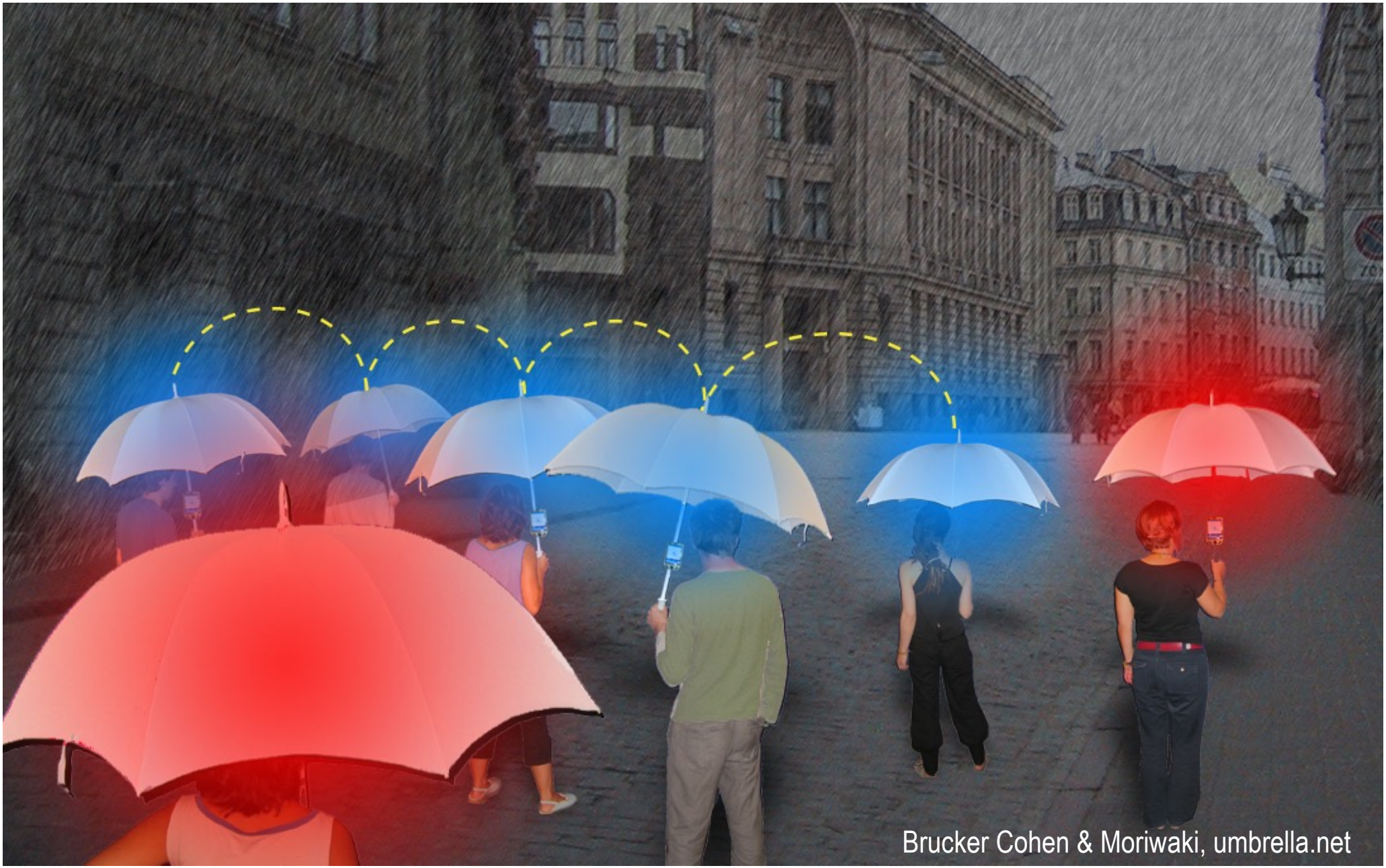
Simmel's (1903) blasé attitude = filter





Network Locality: Sociability

Lehtonen & Mänpää's (1997) street sociability (trust)



Network Locality

Public spaces: composed of local + remote interactions

Mobile technologies re-connect us to the local



Instead of public space being lost to the network, we argue that the network is being pulled into public space.

Special thanks to…

Dr. Eric Gordon, Assistant Professor, Emerson College
*Gordon, E., & de Souza e Silva, A. (2009). *Network Locality: How placeless networks create a culture of location.* New Jersey: Blackwell-Wiley.

Jordan Frith, Doctoral student, Communication Rhetoric and Digital Media Program | NCSU

Daniel M. Sutko, Doctoral student, Communication Rhetoric and Digital Media Program | NCSU
*De Souza e Silva, A., & Sutko, D. M. (2009). *Digital Cityscapes: Merging digital and urban playspaces.* New York: Peter Lang.



More…

Google opt-out village

Net-local interfaces

Mapping applications, location-based games, location-based services…

…locative mobile social networks (CitySense)

