University of Maryland | Digital Humanities, Media & Cultures | March 05, 2010

Network Locality

Reconfiguring surveillance, privacy, exclusion and public spaces in contemporary society



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Outline

1. Research framework
2. Theoretical framework: Network Locality
3. Social implications:

   surveillance, privacy, exclusion, public spaces

Research framework

Digital communication interfaces | public spaces

2 trends



Copacabana beach, Rio de Janeiro, BRAZIL

Research framework

Mobile technology appropriation among low-income communities in

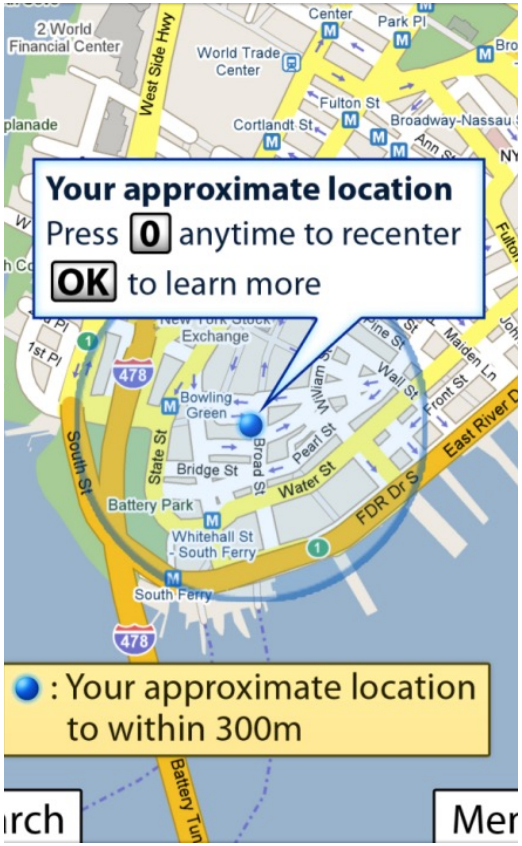




Jardim América and Rocinha “favelas”, Rio de Janeiro, BRAZIL

Research framework

Social and spatial implications of location-aware mobile technologies









Network Locality

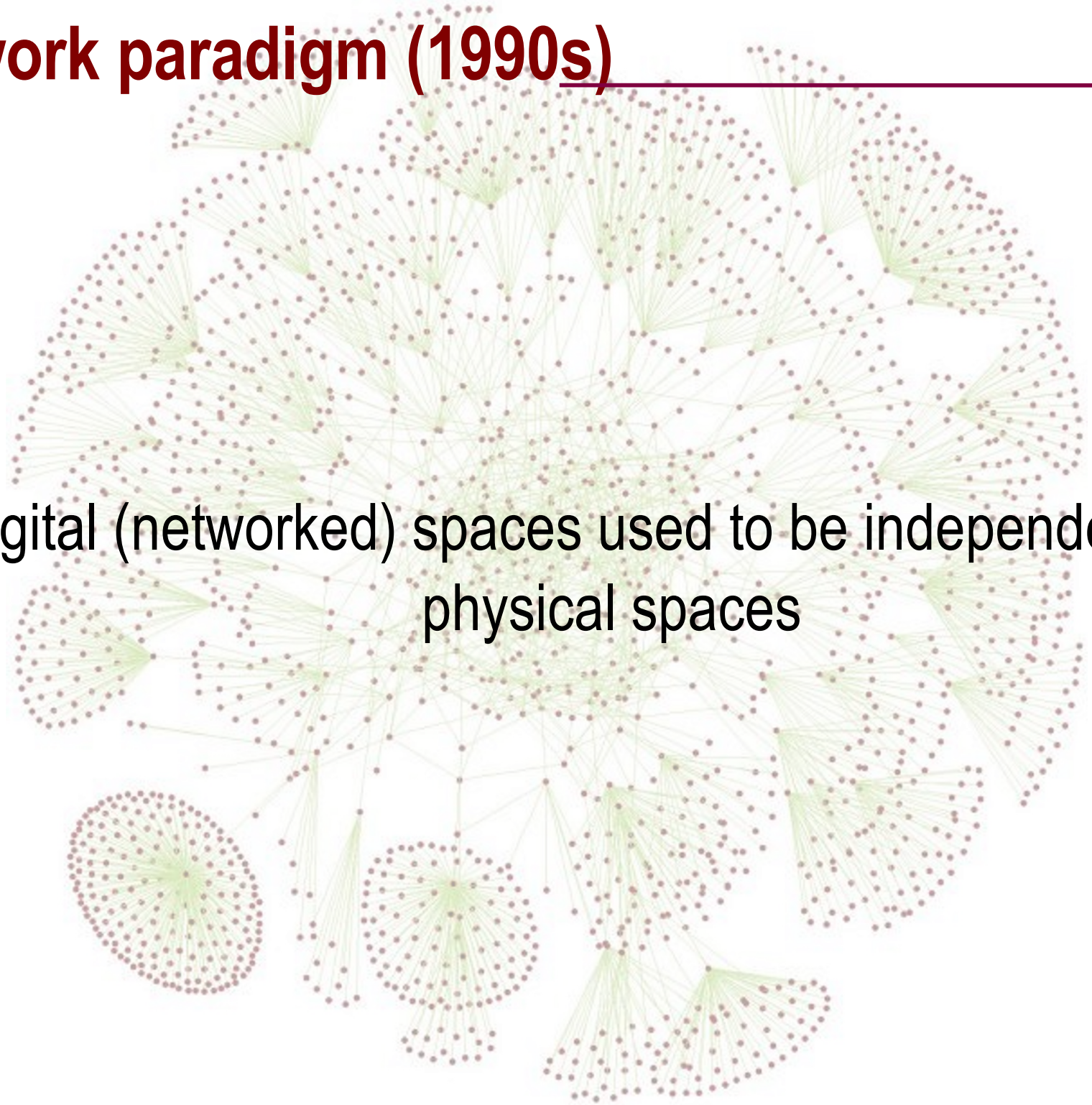


Shift in the way we understand the Internet



Location = organizational logic of networked interactions

Network paradigm (1990s)

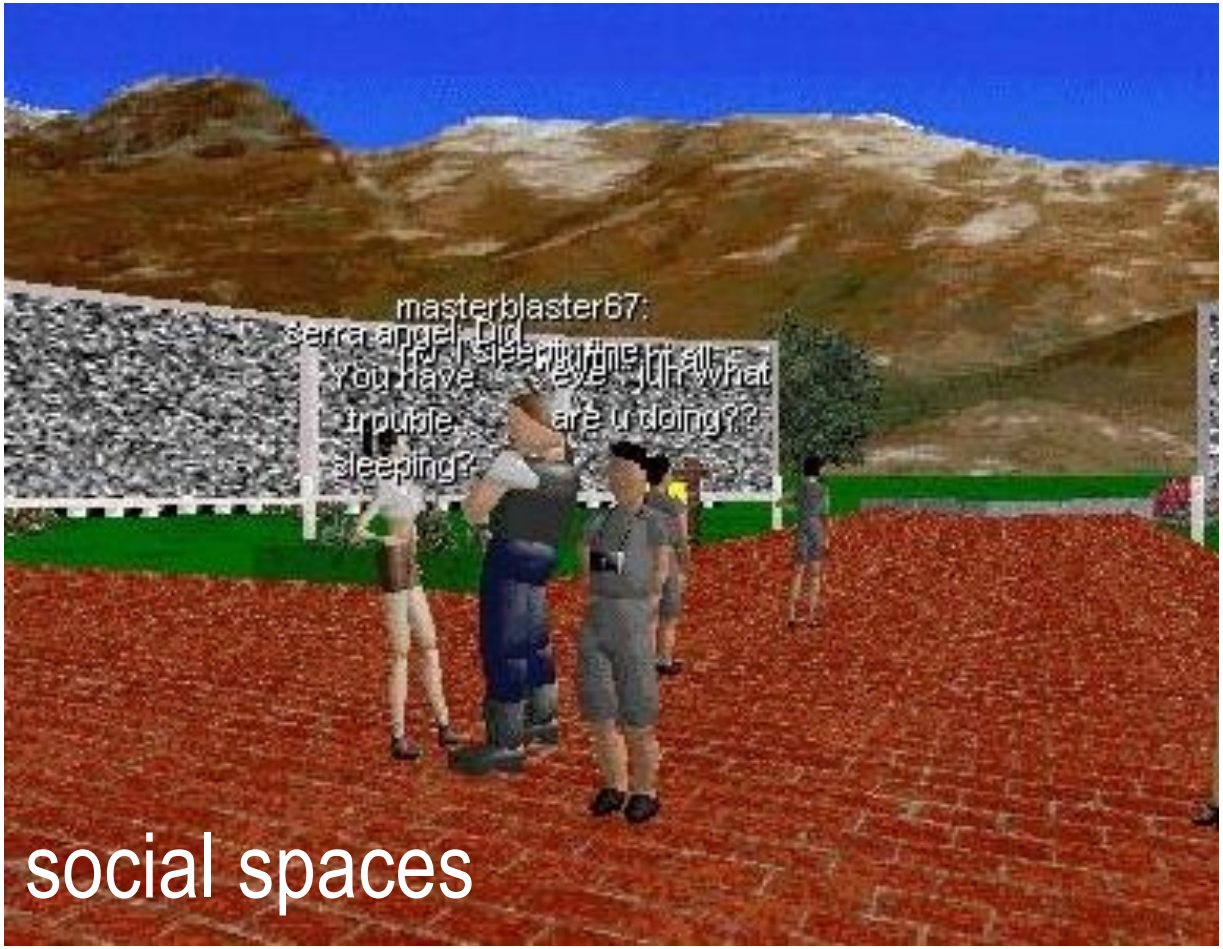


Digital (networked) spaces used to be independent of physical spaces

Network paradigm (1990s)

Internet: non-place / independent from place





social spaces



shopping spaces

Network paradigm (1990s)

Myths of Cyberspace (Couclelis):

- Dissolution of cities (death of geography)
- Reduced need for mobility
- Social spaces → virtual spaces





Network paradigm (1990s)

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





The new mobilities paradigm (2000s)

Mobilties, immobilities, moorings (Sheller & Urry)



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

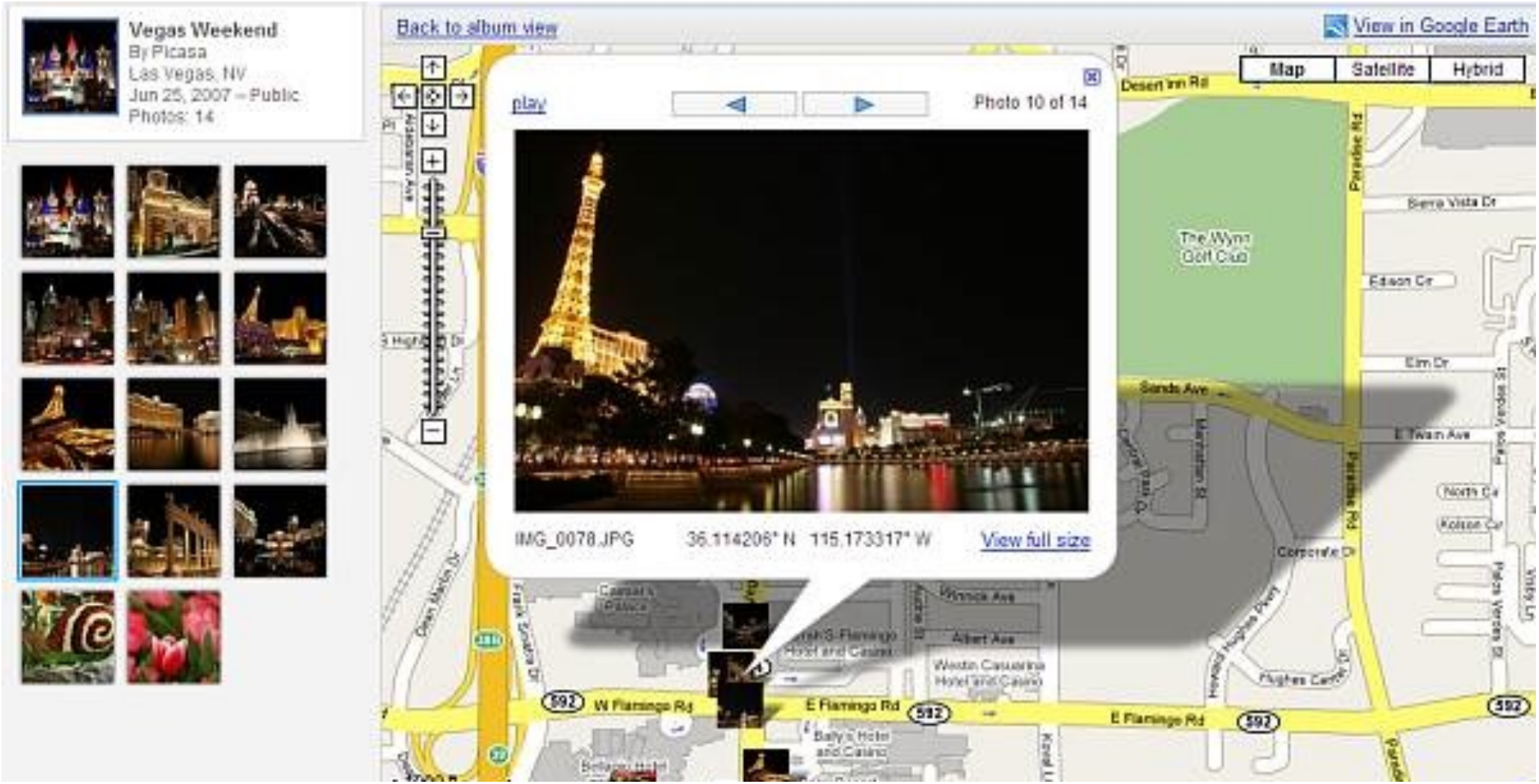


Local = building block of the global (digital networks)

Places = intertwined with digital information

Net-local interfaces

Mapping interfaces

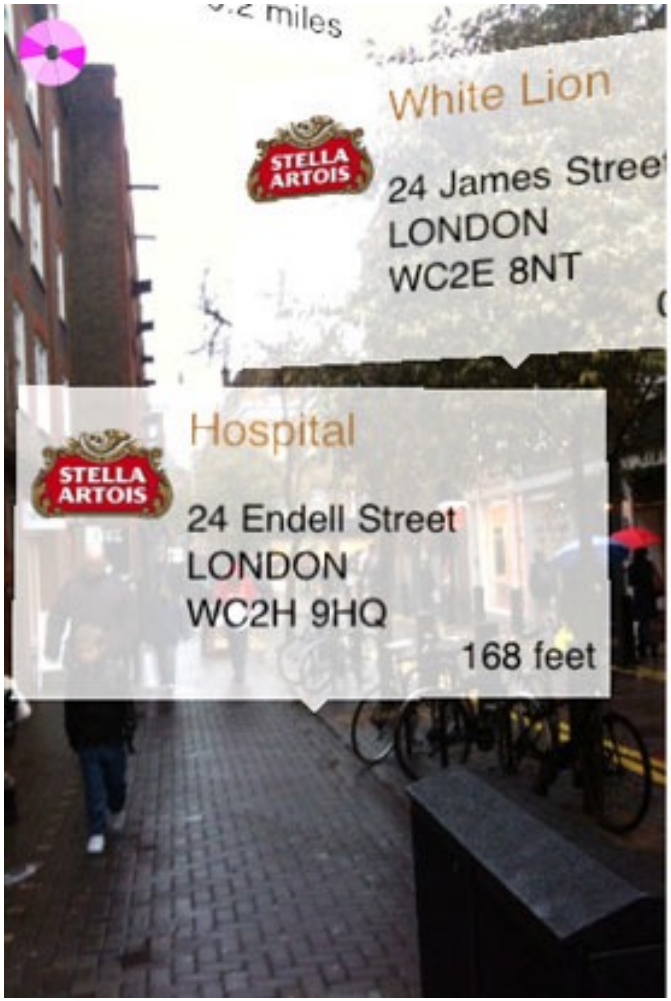


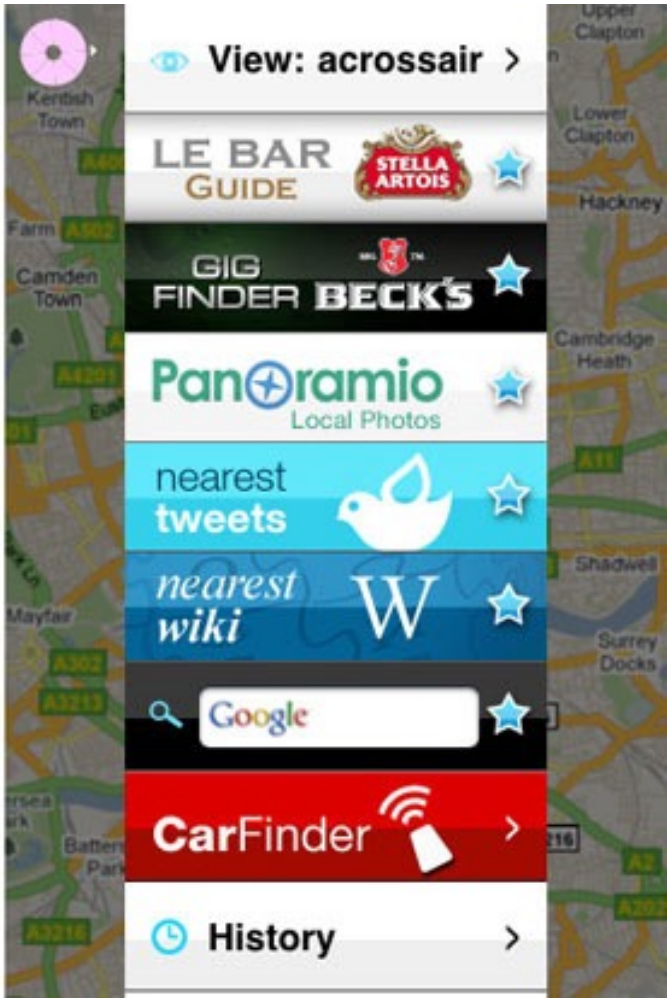
Picasaweb, Flickr, Yelp, Outside.in, Google Maps

Net-local interfaces

Geotagging applications, location-based services



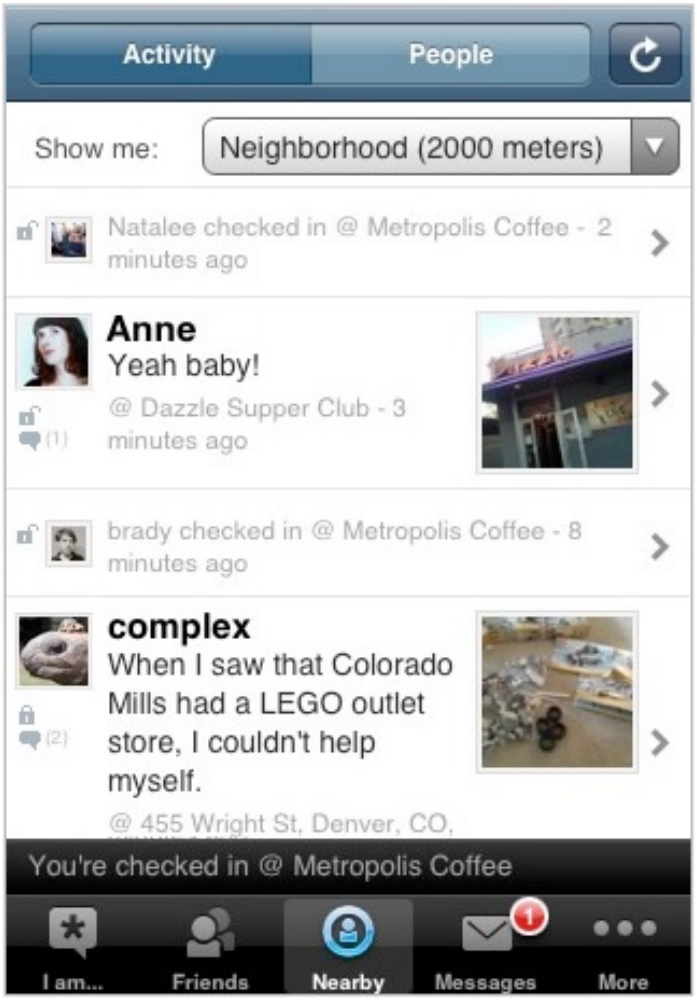


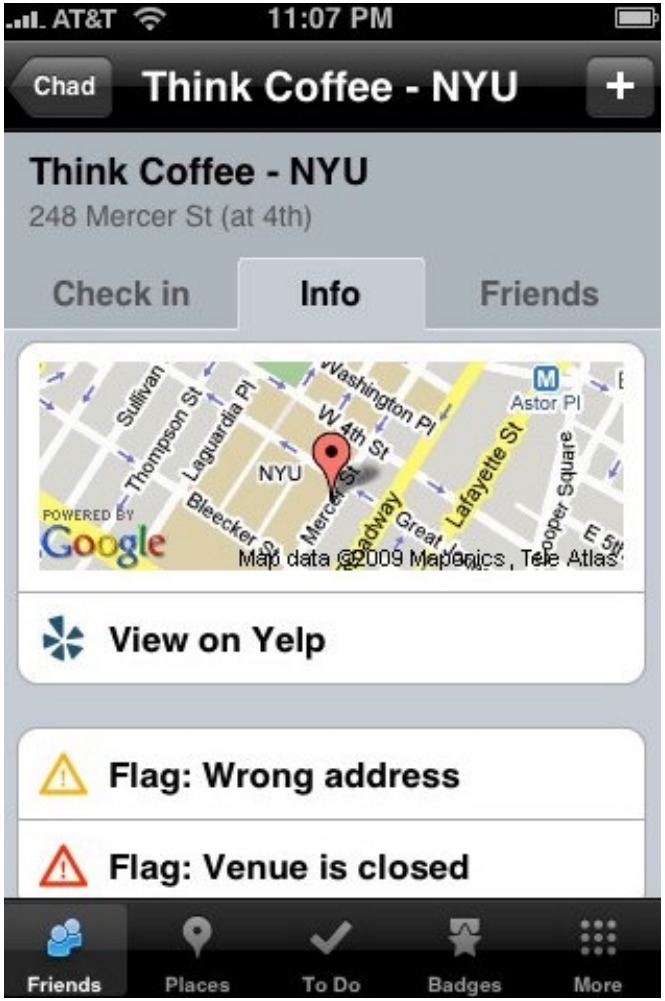


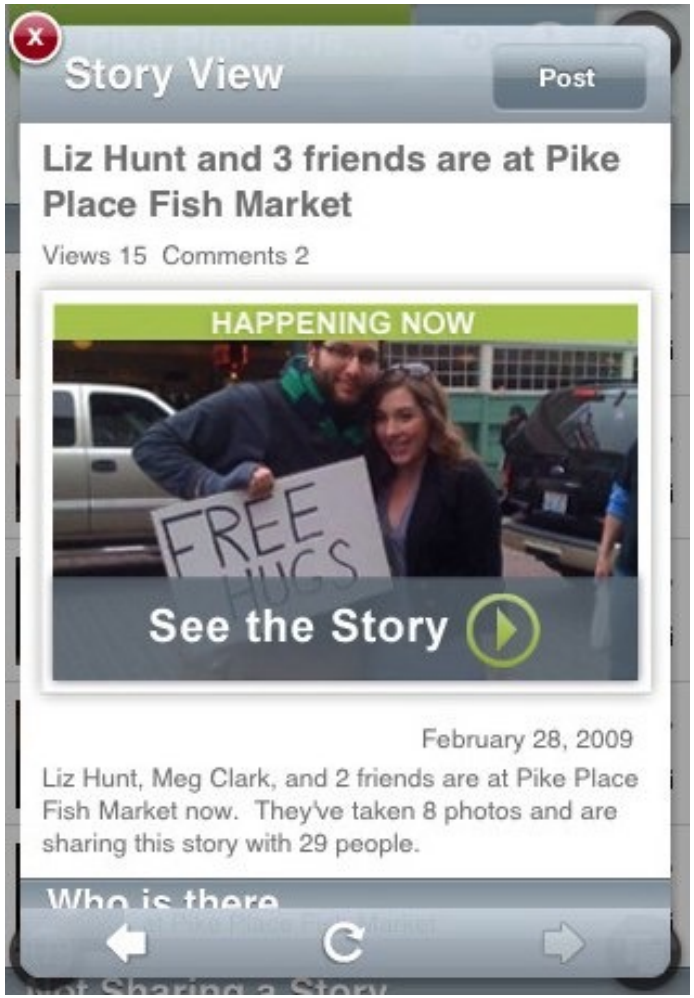
WikiMe, Geopedia,

Net-local interfaces

Location-based social networks, location-based games







Loopt, Brightkite, Whrll, Foursquare, Botfighters, Mogi, etc.

Net-local interfaces

Anonymous location-based social networks





CitySense, CrowdLogic

Questions

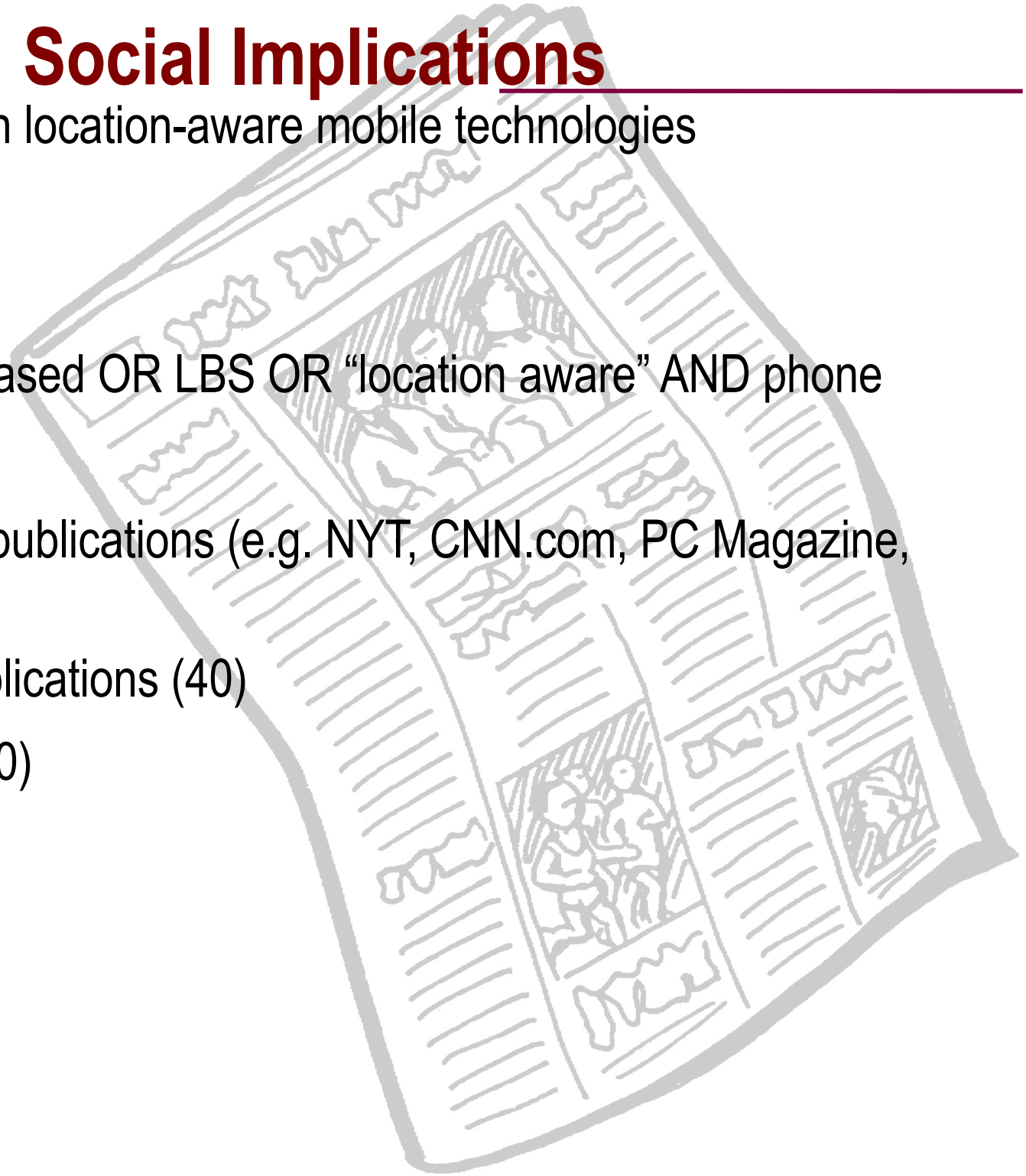
How does network locality and the use of net-local mobile interfaces:

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

[surveillance] [privacy] [control] [exclusion]

Network Locality: Social Implications

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: Social Implications

Surveillance

ADVERTISEMENT / MARKETING (LBS)
(top-down surveillance)

SOCIAL NETWORKING (LBSN)
(co-lateral surveillance)

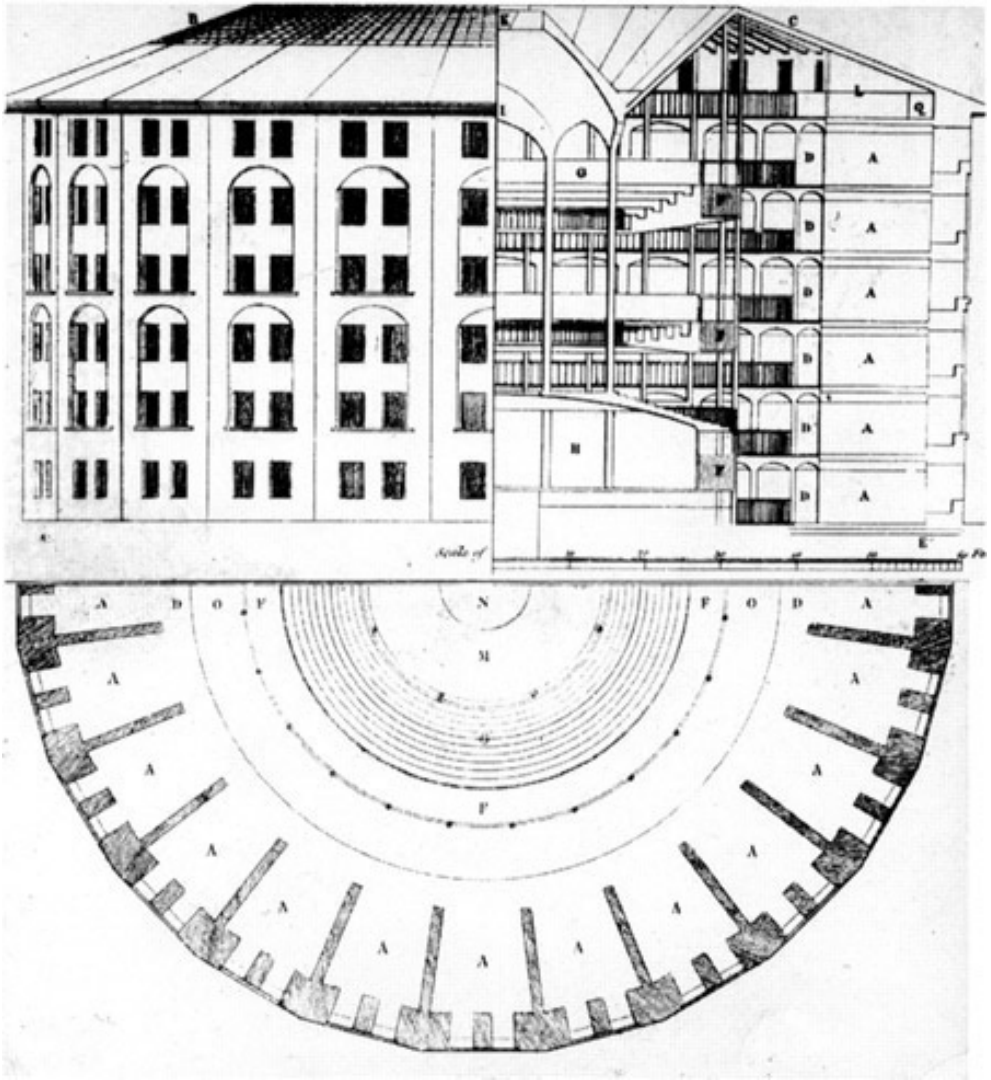


Network Locality: Social Implications

Surveillance in LBS: top-down

"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: Social Implications

Surveillance in LBSN: co-lateral

*"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: Social Implications

Surveillance



Co-lateral surveillance: power asymmetries (Licoppe & Inada)

Network Locality: Social Implications

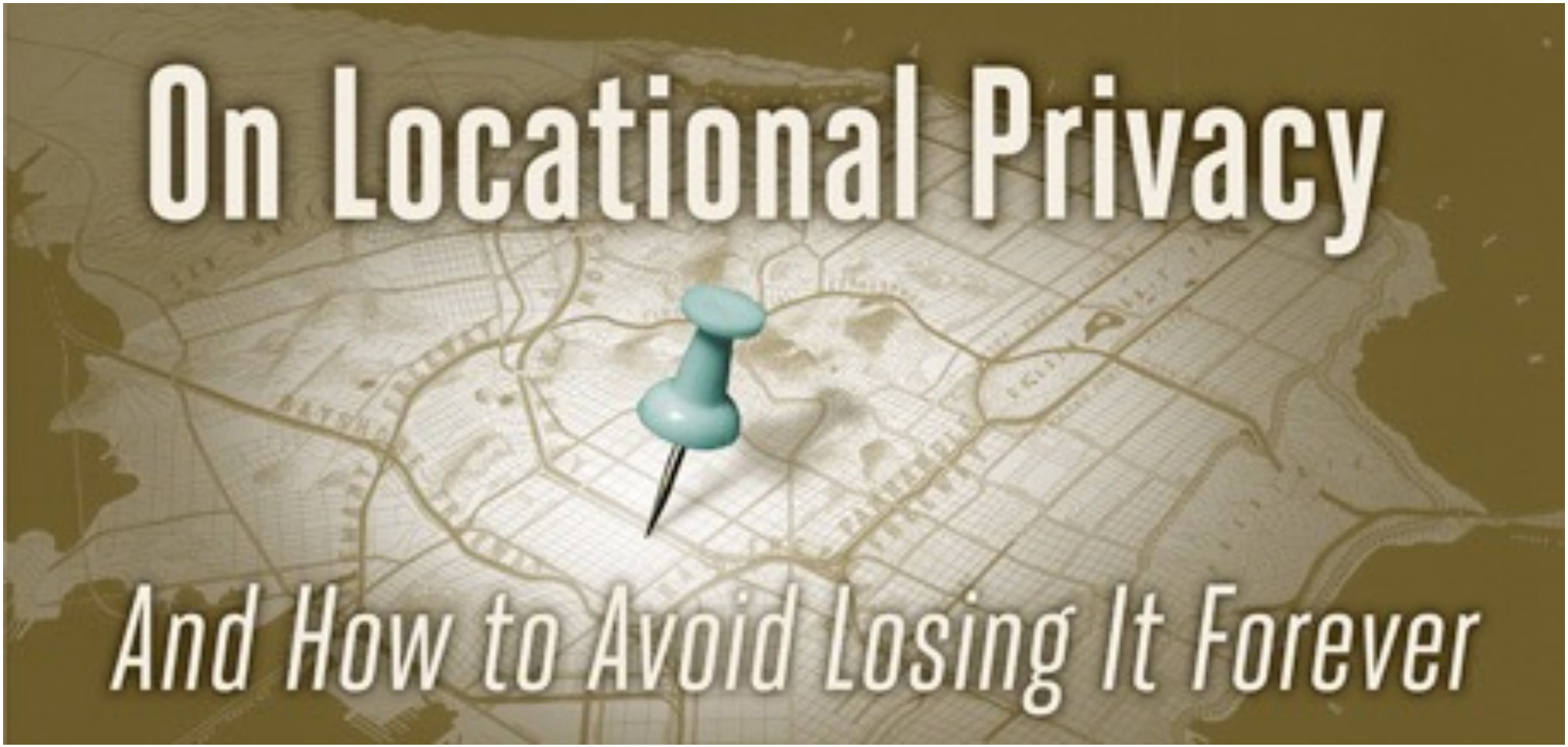
Surveillance

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

What kind of surveillance?
Societies of control (Deleuze)? Kafka's metaphor (Solove)?

Network Locality: Social Implications

Privacy



Are these technologies changing how we understand privacy?

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).

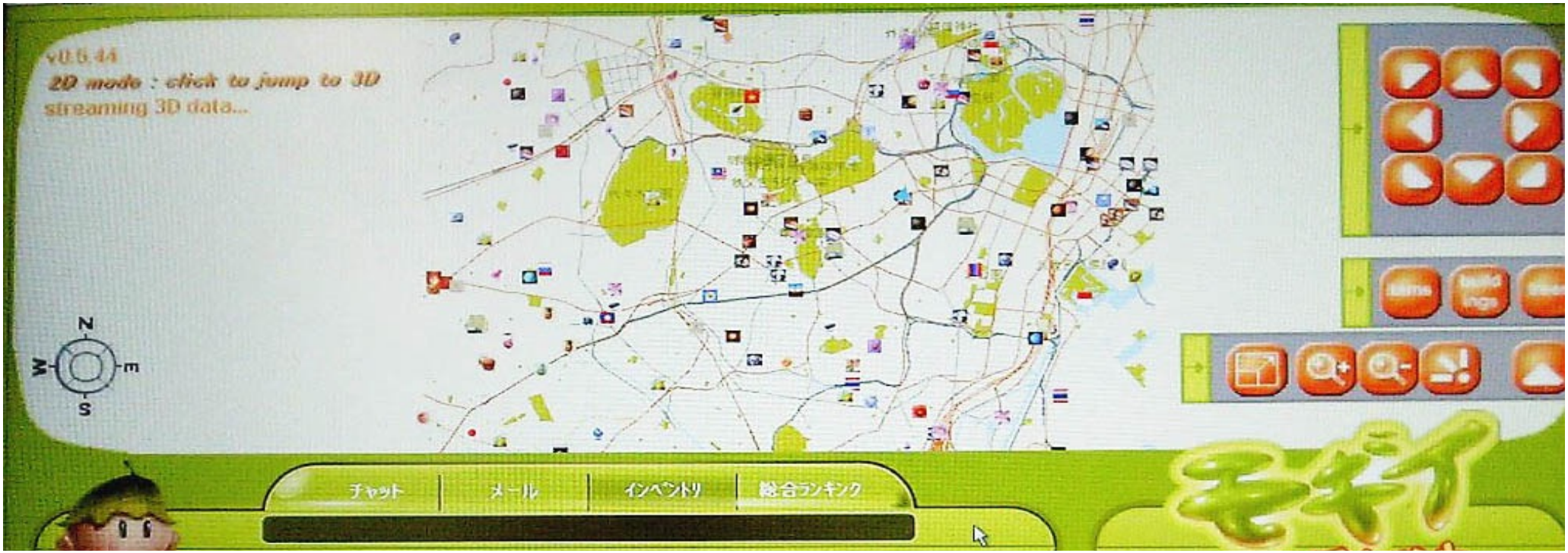


Network Locality: Social Implications

Privacy

Public character of location (Licoppe & Inada)

Private (location) → Public
Public → Private



Network Locality: Social Implications

Control and exclusion

"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: Social Implications

Control and exclusion

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

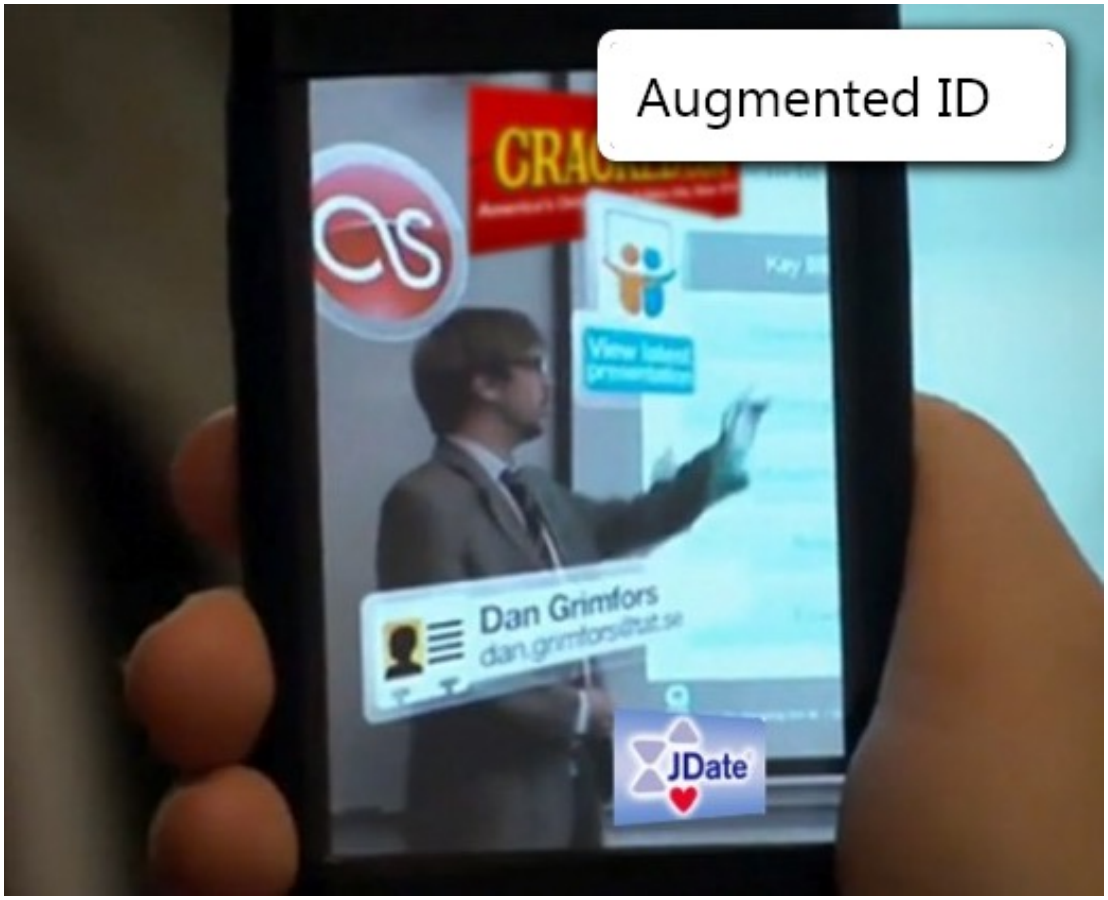
*"Users can also hide their information, turn the service off temporarily or **lie about their location** by setting it manually"* (CBC News, 02.04).



Network Locality: Social Implications

Control and exclusion





Sixth Sense, MIT (Pranav Mistry & Pattie Maes); Recognizr (The Astonishing Tribe)

Network Locality: Social Implications

Control 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

Public spaces

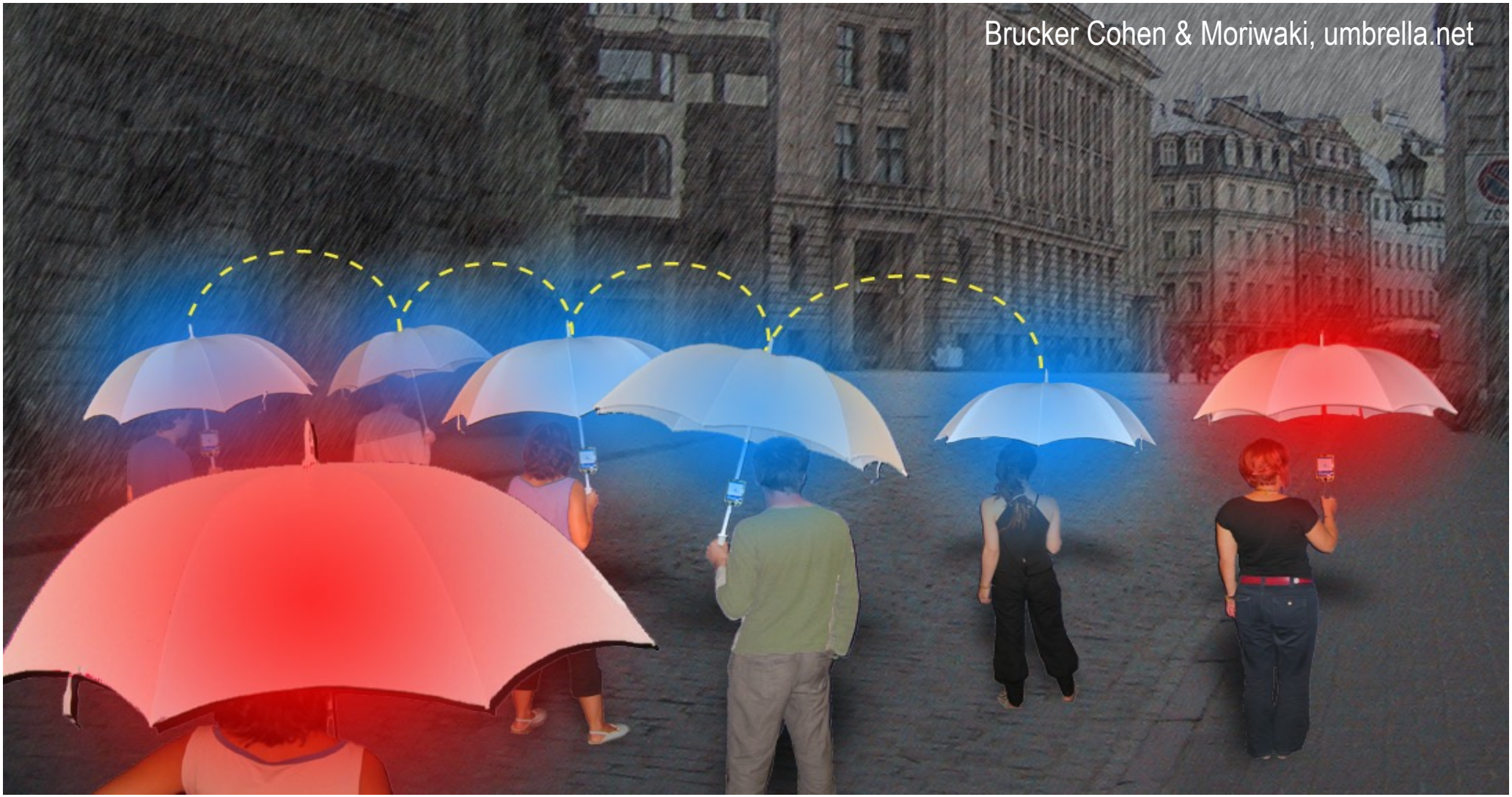




Simmel's (1903) blasé attitude = filter / interface

Network Locality: Social Implications

Public spaces



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

Network Locality: Social Implications

Public spaces

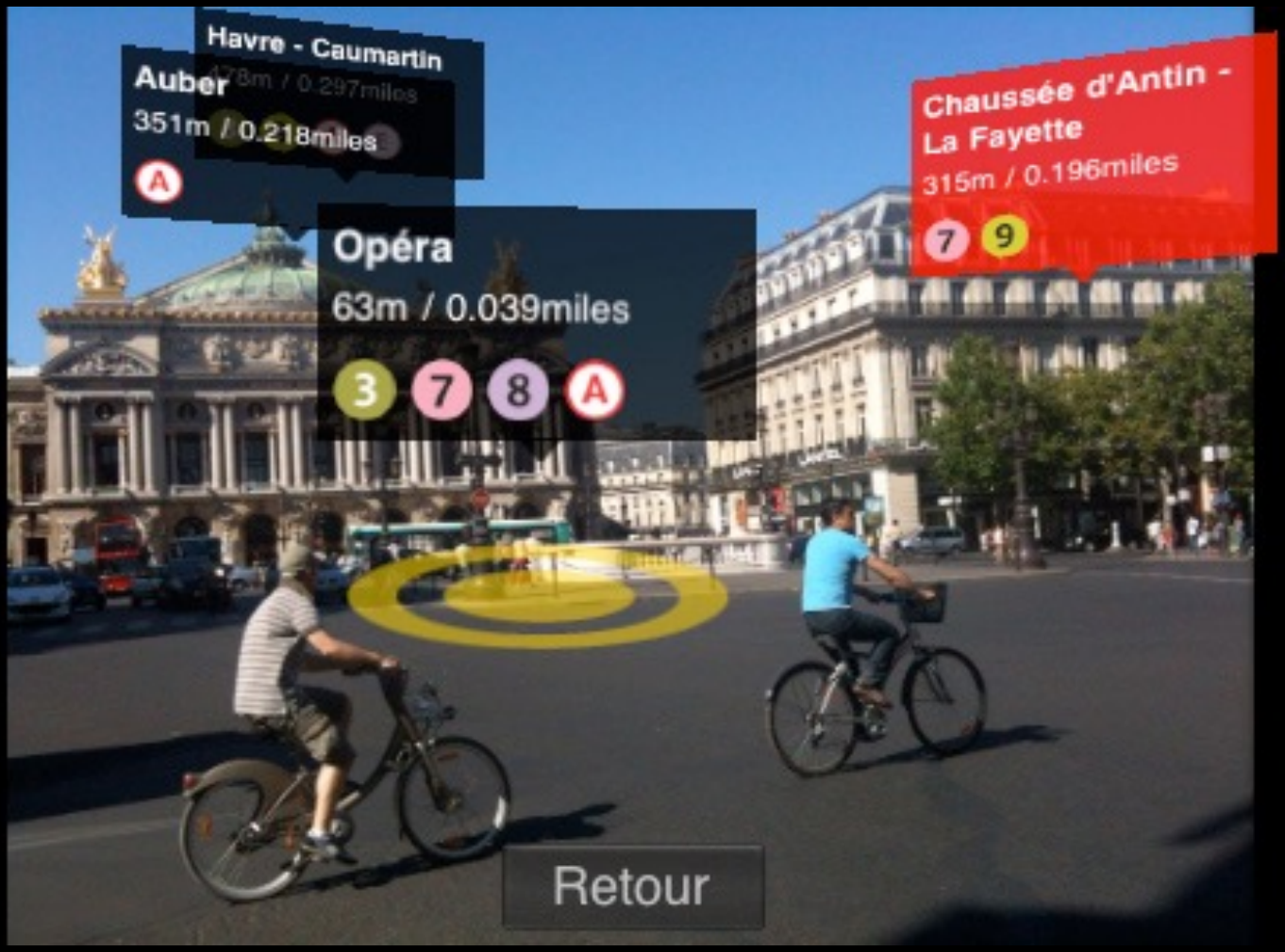
LBMGs

- Play embedded in ordinary life
- Urban spaces = game board
- Familiar → Strange



Network Locality: Social Implications

Net-local spaces: composed of local + remote interactions



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

Thank you!