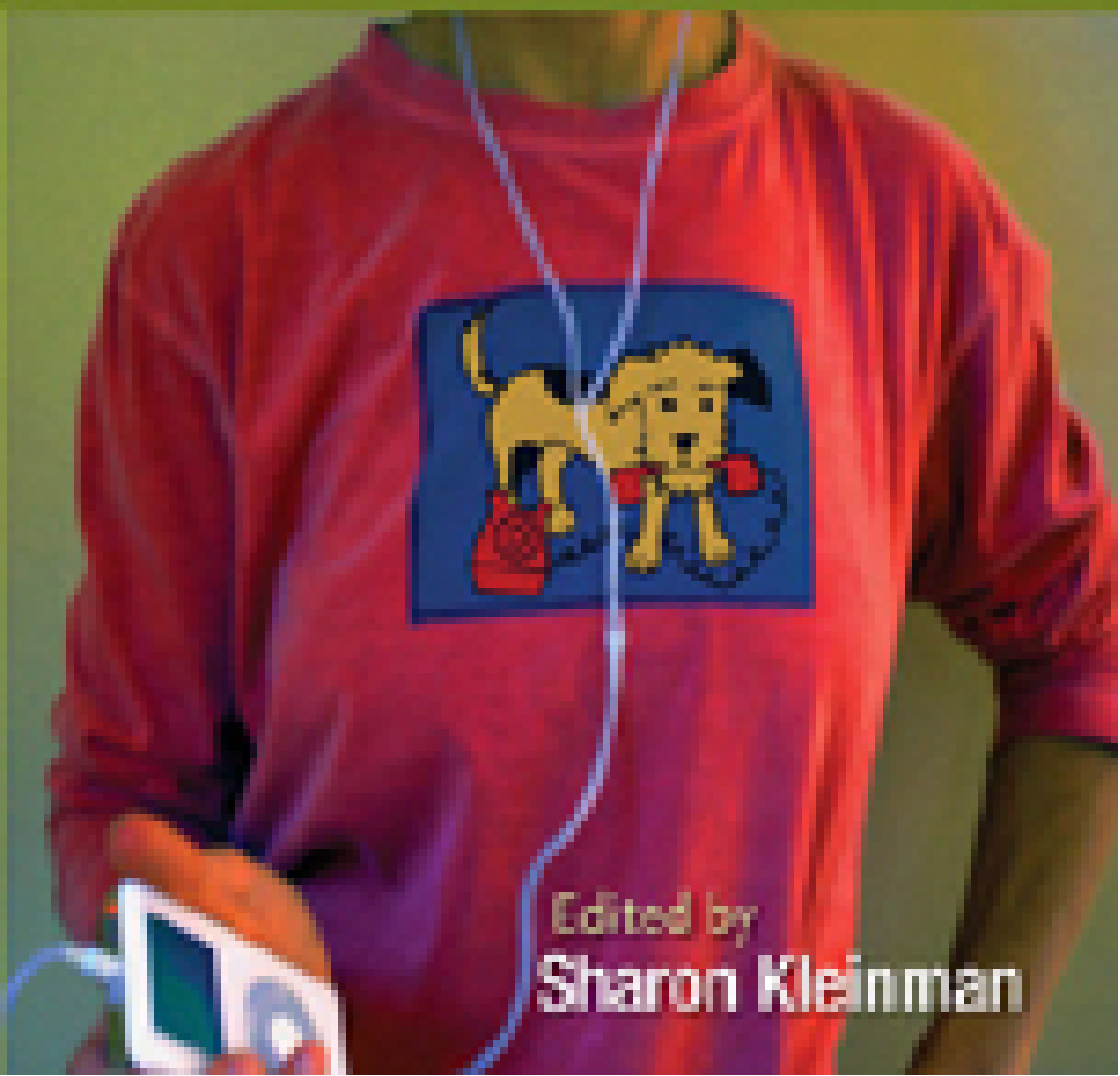


displacing place

Mobile Communication in the Twenty-first Century



Edited by
Sharon Kleinman

INTRODUCTION

Sharon Kleinman

While I was walking in the woods near my home on a Saturday afternoon, my friend James called me on the cell phone from Best Video, a local independent DVD store, to invite me over to his home for dinner and a movie. “Have you seen this one?” he inquired, before selecting a title to rent. Later that night, I responded to questions from my students via email, a five-pound computer propped on my lap while I sat in bed. Meanwhile, a few houses away, my radiologist friend Dena was in her home office reading images of the insides of human bodies generated by magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and computed axial tomography (CAT) machines located in a different state. Twenty-five New York City–area hospitals transmitted images for diagnosis to her and a cohort of radiologists scattered around the country. Teleradiology is a perfect example of “displacing place,” she noted when I told her about this book. She remarked that she enjoyed being “at work” from home, reading MRIs and CAT scans and bantering via instant messenger with other doctors.

A defining characteristic of life in the early twenty-first century is the ubiquity of mobile communication. Mobile information and communication technologies (ICTs) are enabling people to participate in new ways and in additional contexts in a broad range of activities. This book aims to add to our understanding of the implications of mobile ICTs with essays written by leading-

edge scholars and professionals from a variety of fields that explore some of the many stories of mobile communication.

The book's title, *Displacing Place*, refers to the circumstances of mobile communication: "here" and "there" can be virtually anywhere, and, moreover, both can be moving. Key features of mobile ICTs are their portability and their capacity for enabling people to communicate, seek and share information, and be entertained in ways that transcend spatial and temporal constraints.

Displacing Place is divided into three parts. In part 1, "Place and 'Polis," the first five chapters focus on the wide-ranging social implications of mobile communication, exploring emerging issues and looking ahead to the future. In part 2, "Mobile Innovations," the following four chapters reveal how producers and users are imaginatively transforming the features, functions, and symbolic meanings of these technologies. In part 3, "Mobile Technologies at Work," the next five chapters examine how mobile devices are being "put to work" to enhance professional effectiveness in a range of fields.

More specifically, in part 1, Gary Gumpert and Susan J. Drucker set the stage, introducing a new paradigm for mobile communication and analyzing how mobile ICTs influence relationships to place.

Harvey Jassem looks at wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) as part of the broadband information highway, examining the roles governments play in its development and the impacts of universal Wi-Fi access on community life.

Gene Burd considers why mobile ICTs are the latest concern of those predicting the downfall of the city. He argues that mobile communication is modifying cities, uniting the virtual and real, forcing old media to merge and readjust, which will ultimately lead to the rediscovery of interpersonal communication inherent in the nature of cities.

Yvonne Houy explores the implications of findings in the emerging field of interpersonal neurobiology about the formation and functions of human attachments for a society that increasingly lives in a hybrid physical and virtual space through mobile ICTs.

Julie Newman scrutinizes the inherently limited life cycle of ICTs and exposes the environmental and human health impacts of their improper disposal, adding another dimension to the discussion of the effects of ICTs on place.

In part 2, Matthew Williams unveils new cyber-criminal threats facilitated by mobile ICTs, ranging from school bullies harassing fellow students via text and multimedia messaging beyond the school's physical and temporal boundaries, which threatens the sanctity of the home, to hackers viewing the con-

tents of mobile phones, which threatens individual privacy and organizational security.

Julian Kilker focuses on how people inventively modify the characteristics of mobile phones, game devices, and media players to expand where, when, and how media are consumed.

Jarice Hanson and Bryan Baldwin evaluate whether podcasts represent a new generation of public media that democratically foster a diversity of viewpoints and serve the public interest.

Richard Olsen analyzes how cell phones are defined and promoted to potential users through advertisements for cell phones and cell phone plans. He highlights the shift from ads emphasizing connection to those emphasizing stimulation, and he elucidates how advertisements inform as well as reflect people's perceptions and usage of mobile ICTs.

In part 3, Calvert Jones and Patricia Wallace show how mobile communication is facilitating the processes and progress of networked organizations, transforming workplaces, and affecting individuals' work-leisure balance.

Keith J. Ruskin looks at medical communication and assesses how new communication technologies coupled with the easing of hospital restrictions regarding their usage will improve patient care in the operating room and critical care unit.

Penny A. Leisring discusses telehealth approaches within clinical psychology, revealing how the Internet is being used to extend psychological services to people who might not otherwise seek treatment and how Web-based adjunctive services are being used to enhance traditional therapeutic interventions.

Gary Pandolfi evaluates the integration of ICTs into higher education, providing scenarios that illustrate when a new technology might improve teaching and learning, and when it merely produces a new look for the status quo.

Andrew Smith conveys how cell phones, laptop computers, and personal digital assistants (PDAs) have transformed journalism, making it easier for editors to locate reporters and to reduce reporting time, enabling news organizations to get stories on the air, onto the Web, and into newspaper pages faster.

In the conclusion, I reflect on how mobile ICTs are changing our communication opportunities and expectations and altering the nature of communication in public places. I also call attention to situations in which people are regulating or eschewing anytime, any place connectivity in order to decel-

erate the pace of life and focus rather than multitask, which raises questions about how the stories of mobile communication will unfold in the years to come.

Together, the essays in this collection convey new insights about the impacts, symbolic meanings, and future of mobile ICTs that I hope will be valuable not only to students and researchers, but to all readers interested in social and technological trends in the twenty-first century.