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Traces, Places and Self-Evidence - Aspects of „Space" on Cellular Phones

Eine neue elektronische Informationsumwelt übernimmt die Funktionen, die traditionell die städtische Öffentlichkeit erfüllte. Der urbane Raum diente früher für Transport, Klatsch, Aufruhr, Demonstrationen, Selbstdarstellungen, Paraden und sonstige Spektakel; heute ist er überflüssig geworden. **Pawley 1997: 21**

Abstract:

The so-called supermodernity (Marc Augé) is marked by the loss of the social importance of public space. "Non-lieux" like shopping Malls, highways a. s. o. are augmenting day by day. As an interlinking possibility with reality mobile telephones should be interpreted also as sense donating-machinery in their spatial independence. Besides the new transmitters/receivers, as already used in the commercial area (RFID, geo-information), the possibility to visualise the ways and therefore the intentional thinking of the consumer by means of spatial data is an interesting field. "Local based services", criminological devices and simple tools of transaction by means of the "handy" (as German-speaking users call cell-phones) all combine to different aspects of a transformation of the concept of presence in spatial dimensions - telepresence.

Zusammenfassung:

Im Zeitalter der Supermoderne ergibt sich laut Marc Augé nicht nur ein Exzess an Zeit und Raum, sondern auch an Freizeit und damit einhergehend an Telekommunikationsnutzung. In Nicht-Orten wie Einkaufszentren, Autobahnen und Wartesälen stellt die Verbindung zur gewohnten Lebensumgebung oft die einzige Form der Selbstgewissheit dar. Die Verbindung zum sozialen Raum trotz Getrenntheit im physischen Raum ist mittels Mobiltelephon tägliche Realität. Neben Marketingstrategen (RFID, Geoinformation) und Kriminalisten nutzen aber auch mehr und mehr User eine Form der Präsenz, die sich ausschließlich durch die Geräte-basierte räumliche Interaktion bzw. anhand der Ergebnisse dieser Informationsübertragung ermessen lässt – die Telepräsenz.

Introduction

The three-fold excess of time, space and individuality in the so called supermodernity (Augé 1995: 29) is also accompanied by losses. Mostly by loss of the social meaning of public space, which is not only visible in architecture (cf. Graf 2003), but also in telecommunications. Equally, as Marc Augés "Non lieux" (Augé 1995: 106-110), the non-places without identity donation and historical ties (like Shopping Malls, motorways or airplane waiting halls), are covering more and more surface, the meaning of the mobile telephone as link to the social world is on the rise. In addition, the Handy – as the German-speaking world calls mobile phones - is already embedded in a scenery of the transit, as a simple "wait a minute, I park my car" of a called driver proves as well as commercial applications, which use spatial information.

To make the ways of the consumer comprehensible, is not only an affair of the intelligence (particularly drastically demonstrated in the film "Public enemy No. 1") or police networks, but more and more forms a Key-factor in the marketing. Geo information, as it is not to be excluded no more in the location planning of retailers, thereby only represents the beginning. It is also by means of mobile telephones the possibilities of the so-called radio frequency identification (RFID) unfold their effectiveness[1]. The German METRO company and its Future Store in Rheinberg already demonstrate a world-wide clientele the application possibilities to be offered (cf. Hardebusch 2004). From recipes by SMS on the basis of the scanned-in goods in the trolley up to the control of the consumer's way through the market, there are many applications – to be silent completely of paying by Handy, leading to the "transparent client". These services are not called "local based" by chance; in the long run the underline one aspect, which becomes obvious at non-places particularly: The mobile

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[1] The access control for the soccer world championship 2006 in Germany also uses this technology, however with 4 KB chips, which exhibit far smaller efficiency in contrast to the newer generation (cf. Wohllaib 2005).

telephone functions as arranging element, as simplification tool and not least as a founder of social identity.

Non-places: Communication in transition

The global Businessman, to which in small and archaic tribes corresponded the topos of a man "passing through", takes his identity and self certainty with him, only neutral places offer a feeling of home, as in the "paradox of non place":

> *"A foreigner lost in a country he does not know (a „passing stranger") can feel at home there only in the anonymity of motorways, service stations, big stores or hotel chains. For him, an oil company logo is a reassuring landmark; among the supermarket shelves he falls with relief in sanitary, household or food products validated by multinational brand names."* (Augé 1995: 106).

This differentiates the non-places from the areas, which humans traditionally notice as habitat. Here, relations of social kind and history meet to form personal identity. Following the research of Marcel Mauss (Mauss 1966) the actual Western living condition represents the opposite of a culture, which roots in place and time. Also the old, physically thought definition of area as a surface, which contains bodies and/or encloses them, is no longer true in the age of mobile communication. The unity and wholeness of the spatial condition - bi-location, as it was attributed for instance to Saint Nicolas of Cues, accordingly was considered as a miracle - was dissolved by the possibilities of modern communication into multiple representations of the individual a long time ago: ,,*Secondary orality generates a sense for groups immeasurably larger than those of primary oral culture*" (ONG 1982: S.136). It does not only operate on the static level, as sole depicturing of an absent one, but also in real interaction, for example via SMS, which connects us with manifold "communities" nearly in real time. To connect oneself to the socially important distant places, is the main advantage for the individual, as a current Austrian survey among mobile-users over 12 years shows: For 88% of the mobile users it is important to reach the „family, partners and

friends" actively, whereas only 36% have to be on line for professional reasons (cf. Mobilkom Austria 2005). Also calls by friends (passively) are not of that high importance, only 78% regarding this essential for their telephone use (Mobilkom 2005).

Kristof Nyiri once referred to the mobile telephone as a tool, „*durch dessen Verwendung der Einzelne einen riesigen Teil des gesellschaftlichen Gesamtwissens benützt*" (Nyíri 2004: 173; "by the use of which the individual uses an enormous part of society's total knowledge"). An observation for which there are also good linguistic arguments regarding the spatial aspects of mobile communication. In German this takes place more remarkably than in English: The former phone cell, which represented physical presence of communication in the public area, became the "cellular phone" of today. Not the individual caller partitions himself and is protected in his communication[2], but communication is now itself an area, which can be only be disturbed by geographical obstacles. But also on another etymologic level the meaning of the spatial becomes clear: The user, not the telephone is mobile in the mobile communication, in contradiction to the static character of the communicative equipment. Also communication is not by itself (or evenly: always already) mobile, but the receiver/transmitter moves within larger distances, which are to be bridged. This was noticeable particularly at the beginning of the mobile telephony, when the transmitting power was not approximately surface covering - particularly in the alpine area of Austria arose a new feeling for the topography of the country only by mobile application (recte: their disturbance). A propos alpine: A current project of Swiss post office tries to visualize via individual aspects the collective self understanding of the

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[2] Anonymity, which is characteristic for the Internet (not only) in its therapeutic applications, is also granted to a large extent with the mobile telephone. Suppression of the number prevents a substantial part of each communication process, the authenticity of the sender. Accordingly anonymous numbers are there empirically usually assigned to printer cartridge salesmen (the mobile counterpart to the Viagra Spams) or the like, "recognized" as probably unpleasant calls by the suppression of their number's perceptibility. With agencies such as Ministries, which use the fixed net numbers without number display, also the reversal exists. Here "anonymous" calls at the Handy are under normal conditions rather to be taken serious than if the sender appears on the display.

country. "Swiss mobile - a country in motion" elects the best of sent MMS by SMS voting, to let these pictures internationally represent the country on four stamps in September 2005. A better allegoric correspondence between individualizing and construction of identities in areas, in which the public sphere becomes more and more detached from statehood, is hard to conceive.

A third indication for social and thus spatial coding of contents for the Handy supplies the source of most information coming in on mobile telephones: With exception of the ring tones the majority of the contents does not result from the cross-linking in the Web, but linking to a personal network (friends, groups of interests, services), thus from the social and spatial range: *„Ein weiterer Fehler der heutigen Mobiltelephone: Keine der Funktionen kommt über eine aus dem Internet downgeloadete Software"* (Negroponte 2004; "A further error of the today's mobile telephones: None of the functions is derived from downloaded software from the internet"). Not the virtual Web without boundaries contributes data, only the confidence in the transmitters and/or the personal interest situation in terms of peer to peer communication steer the value of a SMS or a MMS. Exaggerating, one must state, there is a lot of gossip, but no nonsense at the mobile telephone. This applies structurally to the extension of the conventional orality and to further non-authoritarian mobile communication possibilities and lends to their contents a special character - in Canadian media theoretician Harold A. Innis' formula: *„Die mündliche Überlieferung enthält den Geist, während Schrift und Druck ihrem Wesen nach materialistisch sind"* (Barck 1997: 180; „The verbal tradition contains the spirit, whereas writing and printing are naturally materialistic").

Tourists of the social information

Due to this transformation of the data sources and the mobility of the terminal user, each place is noticed as a potential communication, movement suddenly follows best receipt possibilities. Marc Augé describes this structurally with the view of the ethnologist, who observed

seniors, who see feasts, which they attended as children, celebrated meanwhile in folkloric form as part of collective history. Places used to them are no longer occupied and possessed by them, but interpreted new and "differently". Their role, not their function is now defined by those, which appear as "tourists of the private". A picture, that also shapes the communication habits of the 2Ist century, in which we ourselves are daily on the way as involuntary tourists of the private, if we listen to the discussions of the others in the means of transport. The radical privatisation not only on the public, but of any area ignores the coincidentally also present ones. Individualized communication possibilities create no elites, but give way to a democratic use of the resources, which are mass-designed devices aimed for mass communication, not tailor-made solutions only for the rich. Sociologically this also offers possibilities for the dissemination of knowledge hitherto unknown or only dreamt of:

> „In the ethnologist's ideal territory […] all men are "average" (we could say "representative"); location in time and space is therefore easy to achieve there: it applies to everyone, and elements like class divisions, migration, urbanization and industrialisation do not intrude to scale down its dimensions and make it more difficult to read (Augè 1995: 49).

The easy operability of the apparatuses, their legibility also for illiterates and untrained readers in terms of conventional scripture deconstruct the old barriers of economic-social reasons. No more elite telephones, as in the early period, when the own importance was strengthened on basis of "accessibility"; only by the democratization - everyone must have something say - also its economic sense is given to communication. The more trivial the offer, the more clearly the procedural instruction, the sooner the sales impact is reached. This "possession passion" ("Besitzpassion"), as Niklas Luhmann (Luhmann 1980: 277) calls the gain of self esteem by information increase, provides for the jerky search for always new stimuli on the mobile platforms. We do not however only have to cope with an electronic *Metexis*, a sharing of the knowledge of and about a society. The knowledge shifts phenomenologically spoken also to

another place, it changes from the underground of the subliminal memory and invisible cables to "surround knowledge" - contents surround us. It is only the question, at which place the telephone user connects himself to these data and which quality his need for information has, because also here naturally the gossip is stronger than most other contents. The cancellation of the function of areas (for instance in the management) and the durable distance of social environments let the meaning of the portable communication tools rise. Doreen Massey understands the social conception of an area as a product of relations located there: „S*pace is the product of interrelations. It is constituted through interactions*" (Massey 1999: 2). Biologically spoken the activity space of the organism became larger, while the value of the territory shrinks. As the meaning of a privately defended place declines, but the space in use reaches out to far larger areas. This is reflected also in a society of singles, in which evenly also less space is needed and/or "breeding and nest area" is less stressed. Deprived of social contacts, the world becomes nevertheless permanently supervised, as the mobile information centre precisely can give information about the doings and whereabouts of absent friends, about all kinds of feelings - except the own.

The telephone as a modern supplier of content reached its zenith at the latest with MMS, Video streaming and UMTS will add maximally the movement to the supplied pictures. The material area is illustrated virtually and consumed that way, but this is not restricted only to private messages. Convergent media environments such as Weblogs make individually produced content (also sent by mobile phones) accessible for a commercial utilization: The French daily paper "Le monde" offers the "blogs" of their readers alongside their own editorial texts on the Website. This "Citizen Journalism" - also operated by MMS via Handy – covers events directly in the environment of the citizens and meets with large approval particularly in the USA. The Northwest Voice (http://www.northwestvoice.com) for example consists of a journalist and four co-workers, who process regional texts of the citizens in Bakersfield, California. In similar detour to local news via larger networks up to global

connections, Berlin-based Constantin Ungureanus operates the portal www.kieznet.com, which serves as an electronic black board for the districts Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg. Built in Cameras in mobile phones catch pictures from the neighbourhood and via on-line messages he tries to manufacture social contacts, which once developed by their own. Even in the anonymity of the cities, local happening becomes visible world-wide and, in addition, even for those, which would pass it by despite their physical neighbourhood. Similarly the municipalities of Bonn (Germany) or Tartu (Estonia – see fig. 1) arranged it for tourists to get the appropriate information from an up to date travel guide via MMS or telephone call to a server, which resends the data about the historical sights there in a SMS, while they stand still before the appropriate trip goal. Which by the way enables the tracking of the tourist's way as well as a ranking of the most popular sights.
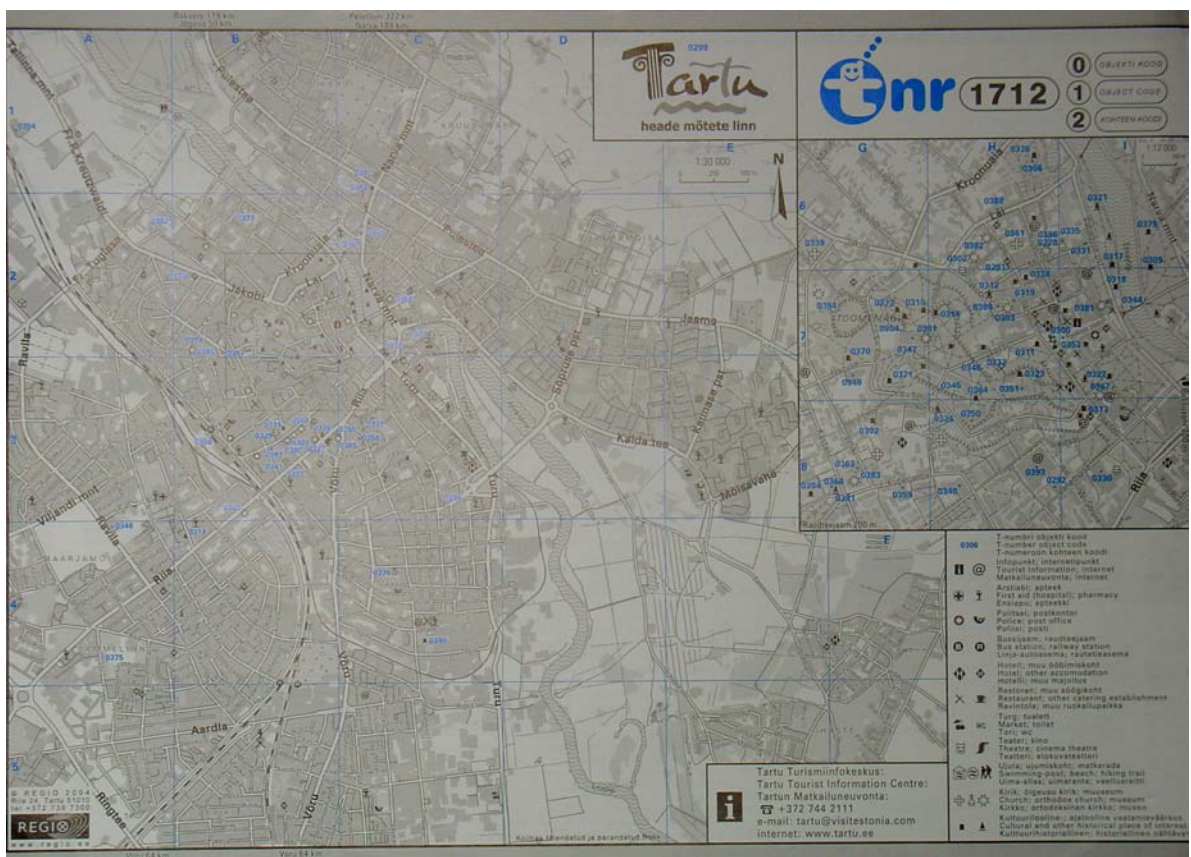

Fig. 1 Tourist City map of Tartu: Just call, we know, where you are

Electronic traces and feelings of safety

Indeed the information value of the spatial movement interested the government authority on the basis means of communication telephone (regardless of whether it is also actually used or is only ready for use) very soon. In addition, the possibility of the portable "call for help" by means of mobile phones is recognized as a subjectively important characteristic by users off the criminal environment - and that clearly: Nine of ten Austrians according to a current study regard their mobile as a personal Security manager, 82% judge it for important, that older people carry a mobile telephone with them (Wolschann 2004: 19). The authorities also use the possibilities of the SMS, as the pilot project of the police in Graz/Austria shows among other initiatives[3]: Here 460 policemen can send warnings at approximately 300 businessmen, booths, banks and gas stations. The SMS search and information system, under the name HAPO (HAndel und POlizei/trade and police) implemented in the Viennese Mariahilfer road, shall now also be used by the Federal Criminal Investigation Office. Above all it is also the spatial information, which grants protection - business in the neighbourhood is warned of false money, trick cheats and pickpockets. Although the geographical reach and the operational area for searches are limited, the area for offenders is made tight electronically[4].

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[3] The project of the German federal police, adjusted in several large cities, which functioned however technically more complex, also is based on interactivity. However, from 12 police headquarters participating in the information-getting and not – giving system, only one wants to maintain it and the whole project faces its terminal phase. (Kissling 2005). *„Einmal suchten wir nach zwei Kindern, ein weiteres Mal nach einem älteren Herren und ein anderes Mal nach einem jungen Mann, der suizidgefährdet war. Weiterhin gab es die SMS-Fahndung nach einem Raub sowie nach einem Überfall auf einen Einkaufsmarkt. In allen fünf Fällen kam keinerlei Rückmeldung von den bisher rund 350 Teilnehmern*", admitted Sirko Eckert of police headquarters Magdeburg („Der SPIEGEL" online, 28.12.2004, http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/politik/0,1518,334577,00.html; ,,Once we looked for two children, furthermore for an older gentleman and another time for a young man, who was feared to have committed suicide. Further there was the SMS search after a robbery as well as after an assault on a purchase market. In all five cases, there came no feedback of the so far approximately 350 participants".). Translations of quotations are by the author, unless not stated otherwise, R.G.

[4] "*In einem Geschäft am Grazer Jakominiplatz hatte eine Person mit einer falschen 50-Euro-Note gezahlt. Das wurde recht schnell bemerkt, die Personenbeschreibung war da, über das Fahndungs-SMS haben wir diese Information hinaus gegeben und in einer Trafik in der Innenstadt konnte der Täter auf Grund dieser Hinweise dann gefasst werden*", stated Kurt Kemeter of the police in Graz in an interview with Styria's radio

On the other hand spatial information itself is communicated, if it concerns anti-state propaganda. As phenomenon of senseless gatherings (so called "flash mobs") just like with political manifestation (1990: Blockade of Hungarian traffic by cabs with CB radio, SMS guided demonstrations before the FIDESZ-party HQ 2002 - cf. Dányi; Süköd 2003: 220 ff.) spatial information is individualized as procedural instruction[5]. It does not concern however a gag, which party supervisors use heavily, also to intelligence sources the new quality, which grants SMS anticonstitutional activities, poses a serious problem. In order to be able to catch up with the new mobility step, enormous organizational and thus in this case legislative measures are necessary - the new mobility has its consequences:

> *Termine, Treffpunkte und Veranstaltungsörtlichkeiten von Konzert- und ähnlichen Szeneveranstaltungen wurden vorerst nur pauschal und ungenau verbreitet und erst in letzter Minute über die genannten Kommunikationsmittel in der Szene publik gemacht. Durch Mobilität der Organisatoren und neue konspirative Qualität bei der Bekanntmachung von Veranstaltungsdaten wird versucht, dem nationalen und internationalen behördlichen Repressionsdruck zu entgehen. So wurde z. B. eine im Juli 2003 ursprünglich in Vorarlberg angekündigte Musikveranstaltung von den Organisatoren innerhalb weniger Stunden nach Oberösterreich verlegt.*
> (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Terrorismusbekämpfung 2004: 39;
> Dates, meeting places and meeting locations of concerts and similar scene meetings, for the time being, were spread only overall and inaccurately and made public only in last minute - over the mentioned means of communication in the scene. By the organisers' mobility and a new conspirative concerning the proclamation of meeting data, one tries to escape the national and international official repression pressure. Thus e.g. in July 2003 a music meeting originally announced for Vorarlberg was shifted by the supervisors to Upper Austria within a few hours.)

ORF. („Steiermark aktuell", 25. 1. 2005, Graz; "In a shop at the Grazer Jakomini-Square a person paid with a faked 50-Euro-Note. They quite fast noticed it there and the person's description was done, we sent it out by SMS and in a tobacco store in the city centre we could seize the delinquent due to these references").

[5] Also this phenomenon has its correspondence in the Internet. Visual viruses in the form of pictures of subversive kind obtained over the Web are placed as message in the public area. Web pages as www.stickernation.com or www.urbanmedium.com make the world-wide occupying of areas without being physically present a kind of countercultural sport.

Apart from this supervising presence of absent social events on the display, which follows Stanley Cavell's (Cavell 1984: 250) pattern of the "monitoring" for the TV screen[6], there exists also a second, kind of telepresence. More like a scheme, it is only noticeable in its effects and represents technical interaction via mobile phones rather than social one.

Spatial presence *in absentia*

The term "telepresence", originally designated the use of remote maintenance in the guidance of robots and machines (Martin 1982). This designation, particularly applied on dangerous working environments (operating rooms, underwater, mines etc..) is nowadays understood in the extended sense as category of the virtual reality, e.g. with McLellan (1996): "*A feeling of being in a location other than where you actually are*". The famous Ontario Telepresence Project (cf. Moore 1997) extended this term visioning the possibilities of telecommunications: "*As we use the term, telepresence is the use of technology to establish a sense of shared presence or shared space among geographically separated members of a group*" (Buxton 1993, 816). Apart from applications in the man-machine interaction[7] – where it is normally based – telepresence has its applications also in the classical configurations of E-Learning (cf. Seppo 1997) and video conference-circuits, in order to make the interaction possible between dislocated persons' groups (cf. Mason 1994).

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[6] „*We are in an era characterized by changes of scale*" (Augè 1995, 31). Most banal details are sent over enormous screens, advertisements for everyday things are shown on megaboards, while important social procedures - for instance in the family – reach us on stamp-large MMS reports from "at home".

[7] South Korean Handy production "Pantech & Curitel" has already integrated extremely slow working chips of the new standard "Zigbee" (20 k-bit/sec.) in its mobile telephones. The functions of a house can be started without being present: Lights go on, the garage opens, the heating is kept at a moderate temperature and the favourite channel at the television is adjusted (Schmundt 2004). Here the "mobile phone" user steers his environment independently with a SMS-able remote control.

Nevertheless, Italian telephone network carriers TIM and Vodafone also let the late Pope personally appear in a MMS to its customers on December, 24th, 2004. In co-operation with the television station RAI, His Holiness John Paul II. celebrated the Christmas service and users thus could join the celebration an St. Peter's Dome without losing the domestic Christian tree from the eye. The connection between spatial distance and identity-donating message on the display is noticeable also here: One can feel a good Catholic in his own four walls and does not even have to leave. In times of scarce resources (lack of priests) the possibility of attending the service without pursuing it locally really offers a surplus for elderly, ill or and mobility-limited persons, regardless of its origin in a marketing-strategy. But also the protection from so intense proximity, in particular unwanted one, already became the line of business of the portable phone-enterprises. The phenomenon of nocturnal calls to friends and colleagues - in the USA known already as "drunk dialing" – can be prevented. A small fee and a three-figure number make it possible: Before leaving for a pub crawl the Australian Provider "Virgin mobile" blocks those numbers, which one should not select drunk, until six o'clock in the morning (Lee 2005: 2).

Conclusion

Regardless of the example above and its rather funny background, social presence in the new sense also becomes determined by the individual reflection of acting in the media surroundings (Tammelin 1998: 5) and the interaction thereby. The consequence is clear: We rather modify our communication, than our behaviour. Para-social relations, as they are manufactured meanwhile by the telephone and also on it (MMS) can deliver a "digital image", from which we have to protect ourselves in order not to collide with the social "image" built up in the genuine life.

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