MuLiMob - Multilingualism and mobility

Funded by the European Commission as part of the IST programme, MuLiMob SSA aims to make the most of Europe's multilingual and multicultural diversity for the benefit of its mobile users and workers, by making information available on current and potential developments and by identifying research to be done.

MuLiMob is a Specific Support Action within the group of projects arising from the call for applications and services for the mobile user and worker. It gathers 5 SMEs from 4 different countries. MuLiMob's vision and ambition is to use the multilingual diversity of Europe as a mobile market amplifier: to show the importance of, and potential applications for, multilingualism in the mobile environment; to consider development methods, technology and business models; as well as lowering the barriers that currently limit deployment in the mobile marketplace and increasing interoperability and openness.

MuLiMob's main objectives are to enhance the awareness of the wireless community concerning multilingual and multicultural mobile services and applications issues; to stimulate a rapid take up of innovative ideas within the whole mobile value chain, for user- friendly and cost effective multilingual services for mobile users and workers; and to identify the issues and problems that need further research, applications and solutions. It will use the context and the needs of the music industry as a basis for its work.

Results are expected in three main areas: technological advance; identification of marketing and business opportunities; and communication and dissemination to enhance awareness.

The MuLiMob consortium brings together five experienced and enthusiastic participants!

Musiwave, Paris is a leading European mobile music and entertainment service provider operating in 11 countries across Europe, Oceania and through Asia with its subsidiary in Hong Kong.

RandomOne, Barcelona, is a specialist in mobile marketing communication, creating new concepts and developing user-oriented services software.

Plus connect telecommunication, Wireless Around People, London, is a wireless industry networking entity, organising conferences all over Europe, which is also expert in mobile applications and technologies.

Crammed Discs, Brussels, is a creative cosmopolitan and multicultural independent music label, publishing, distributing and promoting artists from all over the world in over 30 countries.

And Hélène Abrand Consulting, Paris, the conceiver and pilot of the project, a new media international consulting company working with new technologies, institutions and creative industries, experienced in networking, particularly throughout Europe and in Japan.

The trans cultural web in the mobile device.
-The media is the message

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Abstract
The future of the mobile interface is the internet. On top of technical complications, this leads us to questioning the role of the media in a cultural embedded context. We need to understand what level of expression, interaction and communication is required in order to enforce user experience from a media esthetic point of view.

Keywords: *Multilingualism, personal connections, cultural interfaces, mobility, social and cultural contexts*

Introduction
At a moment where mobile phones, PDA's and computers are turning into one mobile device creating geographical liberty, eased communication and transparent information retrieval, it might be an idea to question the social and cultural role of the media. If the hand held device is going to carry all functions in all kinds of situations, we need to consider the media not only the specific functional needs, as it happens when the utility of medias can be isolated and limited to have one function, but also the role we need the media to play in contextual situations.

The personal interface and the personal web of connections
The mobile phone as an electronic device changing human social behavior has been subject of interest by researchers in different fields as anthropology, HCI (human computer interaction), sociology and psychology. The idealistic idea of the mobile phone as an object that connects geographically separated people, has somehow been reconsidered, reflected by the fact that a mobile phone ringing tends to create a rejection of actors in physical social situations. In addition to this, the mobile phone has become a concentrated personal object, with personal content and signification. Researchers have shown how people use their phones to signify who they are and to manifest their independency towards other people in social situations. The phone ringing in inadequate situations can be considered a violent disturbance of the physical sociability. Subjects most often answers calls immediately, neglecting subjects in the physical social situation.
Social life has with mobile phones changed into primary social networks – the subject linked to other subjects in the address book, having a priority - and secondary social networks, which are the different

physical social situations. In other words, the subject can be considered to walk around with his personal web of connections, always accessible and always reachable. Physical actors tend to become transparent, as soon as the phone is ringing.

The social cyberspace
Contrary to the mobile phones the web has been considered a virtual space existing parallel to the physical social space and isolating individuals from direct social relation, inventing a so called cyberspace, with its own rules, norms and communicative codes. Whereas social "cyber relations" are mediated in forms that are immediate (MUDs, chats) or gradual (email, forums), the linguistic mode of expression is adapted to the form of the media, inventing new codes and significations and creating social spaces that can be defined by sets of rules that are embedded in the form of the media and its limitations. Individuals communicating on the internet cannot be defined as cultural embedded actors, as the communication most often is crossing borders and needs to adapt to a clear, denotative mode of expression that very often is filtered in one language (English). The cyber sociability creates thus a mode of communication, which per se is detached from the cultural context.

Linguistic tribes and mobile phones
Parallel to this on-line movement in human communication, the mobile phone and SMS messages have contributed to a new form of written communication. Teens have become specialists in expressing themselves in extremely compressed ways creating a new language, linked to its social context and the possibilities that are given by the media. It emphasizes the personal mobile web of connections and is to some extent self-enhancing, as individuals tend to re-use expressions, coming from other individuals. Mobile social life can from this point of view be seen as networks of individuals connected by re-mediated linguistic expressions and marginalizing physical social actors.
Immediate communication on the web and communication using mobile phones are in both cases embedded in the media and its limitations. The difference between the two forms is to be found in the cultural context: Immediate communication on the web creates its proper social space. It is not linked to the physical social or cultural context, because actors physically are situated in different cultural and social situations, whereas networks of mobile connections mostly are localized.
So far, we can define two existing modes of direct immediate written communication:

1. The online cyberspace, reinventing itself independently of the physical social and cultural context of the actors.
2. The mobile messaging localized and reinventing linguistic expressions linked to the physical social and cultural context.

The cultural interface on the web
When considering the written communication on the web, there is, however, a fairly known mode, that is embedded in the cultural context. The most common form of communication on the internet is the hypertext – the one we surf every day, visiting different html pages linked together, whether it's to achieve information or to obtain a goal (by buying an object on-line for example). The user in this situation can be said to be linguistically inactive. It does not mean that the communication happens in one sense (from the screen to the user). The user expresses himself interactively by the choice of links

and by creating cognitive models of his path in order to obtain his goals efficiently. The internets web of connections is divergent to the so called cyberspace – with its own expressions and internal rules – linked to the cultural context: Internet pages utilize linguistic expressions and visual signs with roots in the specific cultural context, re-mediating forms from other Medias, a phenomenon Lev Manovich termed Cultural Interfaces[1]. This tendency can more specifically be observed in on-line publicity campaigns, adapting the mode of expression to the different social and cultural receiver (Nike, Adidas, and Diesel). These collections of html pages most often are linked to other collections of html pages, by partnerships. The web of linked html pages can thus be considered a cultural mode of communication, where user interaction is decisive for the content.

The cultural mobile interface
So far, we can categories three major modes of textual communication: First, the immediate cyber communication on the web between subjects, *isolated from the cultural context. S*econd, the immediate SMS messaging between subjects, *linked to the local cultural context*, and, third, the cultural interface, *adapted to the cultural context* utilizing the media as being interactive to integrate the user in the evaluation of content.
So how can we describe the future mode of communication, prone to be the cultural interface in mobile phones? So far, the mode of expression has been limited to technical restrictions of media. In order to understand usability, the mobile user experience and his needs, we need to consider the unprocessed mode of communication from a media esthetic point of view: Mobile phones so far, creates web of connections that are localized, thereby re-inventing linguistic expressions that to a certain point can be considered as internal codes among different local groups of individuals. The web creates web of connections that are cultural, thereby re-inventing linguistic and visual expressions that needs to reach larger cultural groups. In these two modalities the linguistic expression is linked to its geographical physical environment in two different scales: the social, being small groups of individuals and the cultural, being large groups of individuals. In the end the internet in mobile phones can be considered having a great potential in integrating cultural communication forms in a media that textually is restricted to linguistic modes of localized expressions.

The cultural interface and multilingualism in mobile phones
If we want to turn the human computer mobile interface into a cultural embedded interaction device, we need to find out how the user in the future will manage his level of expression. It can be done either by direct linguistic participation (sending messages) or by interactive actions (navigating), or both. The petition in design and research will be to find out 1) how to embed the mobile device in a cultural context, 2) how to adapted form of interaction and 3) how technology can support these needs. These are question we will arise throughout the MuLiMob project, in order to establish a framework for design.

Conclusion
Striving for a transparent and goal oriented interaction and exclusively considering the functional role of the mobile phone, there's a risk of reducing the importance of the users embedness in the cultural context. Embodied interaction may be neglected, reducing interaction to be pure functional. Design of content and modes of expressions needs to be user-centered: The user per se exists in a social and

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[1] Manovich, 1996

cultural context. His motivations for interactions are based on this embedness and the mobile device needs to adapt to these motivations thereby strengthening user experience in mobility.

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