Interactive City

from "2006 01SJ Biennial" section in *Superlight* (San Jose: Zer01SJ, 2008)

We imagine the city as a place of many layers. Within the streets, architecture, and people of a city, we are able to access history, hopes for the future, and even far away places. We find ourselves in communal space, sometimes connected, sometimes alone, and all around us is a city full of both visible and invisible elements.

Megacities rise with such developments as the inexorable conversion of public spaces into commercial spaces, the advent of 24/7 rush hours, increased surveillance, the computer-assisted precision of redlining, and the viral advance of the xenophobic. There is an invisible city growing within the megacity. It is the electromagnetic, Hertzian spectrum flowing ceaselessly with data about, from, and between us, but always activated by the interfaces of commerce and government—cell phones, surveillance cameras, marketing databases, and navigation systems that will alert us to a nearby sale.

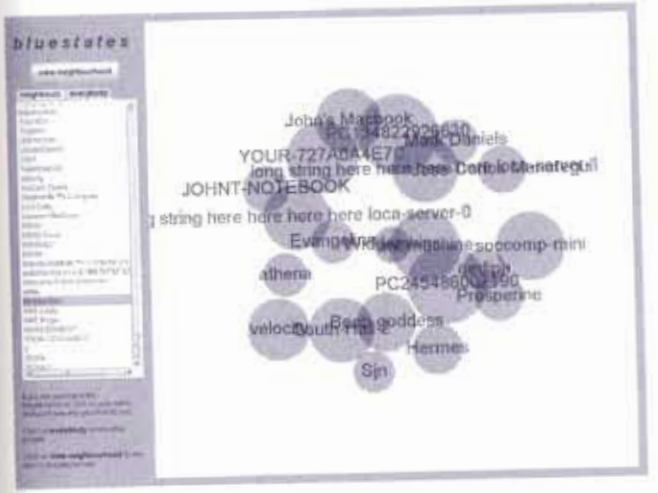
For the Interactive City theme, the city itself was imagined as an interface that could access the future and the past, the distant and the present, the communal and the individual in marvelous ways, allowing us to enjoy what Italo Calvino referred to as the "opaque and fictitious thickness" of an invisible city made visible.

There have been many exhibitions about the city, notably Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Hou Hanru's Cities on the Move (1997/1999), but none have treated the city itself as the "medium." "Cities on the Move developed through happenstance," Obrist notes in the exhibition catalogue. "The exhibition can be seen as a network. The exhibition was placed on the idea of the city involving positive-feedback loops. This metaphor can be extended to the role of positive-feedback loops in learning that the exhibition as a city becomes a kind of learning system."

Interactive City expanded the feedback loop into and through the city itself, transforming the "new" technologies of mobile and pervasive computing, ubiquitous networks, and locative media into experiences with urban-scale projects for which the city was not merely a palimpsest of our desires but an active participant in their formation.

Baby Love, 2005
Shu Lea Cheang
(Taiwan/US/France)
babylove.biz

Photo: Everett Taasevigen



bluestates: exploring relational space, 2006
Mark Pesce (US/Austr
John Tonkin (Australi
relationalspace.org

Call, 2006
Germaine Koh
(Malaysia/Canada)
www.germainekoh.c
call.html