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a professional case, looks into experiments that “directly challenge our unspoken assumptions about money” (p. 163). In the Ithaca HOURS alternative payment system, name-your-price restaurants, an artist established “free store,” corporate salary redistribution programs, and reverse mission trips, Delaney finds that the significance and meaning of money comes from the social practices that surround its use. These experiments are “supposed to slow money down” (p. 173), they are “a way to start conversations and build community” (p. 175), thus, “reinforcing the social connection between transacting parties” (p. 166).

In *Money at Work*, Delaney blends cultural and economic sociology to show that money is much more than a tool for exchange. It is also a carrier of meaning and value based upon social relationships and practices. His richly detailed and analyzed interviews bring out the ways that different professions lead to different money cultures. The understandings and habits of mind that take shape in these money cultures permeate our everyday lives. Delaney has provided a useful book that helps us to better understand work and the economy, and how our work shapes our identities.

The Great Indian Phone Book: How the Cheap Cell Phone Changes Business, Politics, and Daily Life, by **Assa Doron** and **Robin Jeffrey**. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013. 293pp. \$29.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780674072688.

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In the first dozen years of the twenty-first century, worldwide rates of cell (or “mobile”) phone subscriptions soared from fewer than two per ten people to nearly one per person.¹ The growth has been most stunningly rapid in developing nations—so much so that a 2013 UN report on the

shortage of sanitation highlighted that crisis by pointing out that far fewer humans have access to toilets than to cell phones.² Moreover, cell phone users in developing nations seem to use them more broadly than do subscribers in affluent nations—to do their banking, for example. This breakneck diffusion calls for explanation and an assessment of its consequences. In *The Great Indian Phone Book*, anthropologist Assa Doron and historian Robin Jeffrey combine research literature, interviews, firsthand fieldwork in the north, and journalistic accounts into an informative, evenhanded description of this radical development, all the more radical for happening in such an impoverished and rural nation. In 2002, few Indians were connected telephonically, either with or without wires; in 2012, after a 20-fold expansion, more than three in four had wireless access—with more than half of rural households covered—at what Americans would consider an incredibly low cost.

Doron and Jeffrey’s account of how this happened is a testimony to neo-liberalism. India had a creaky, corrupt, and rigid government telephone system. Millions of customers idled on waiting lists, the hardware performed poorly, and the companies charged high rates. Pressed by international agencies, the Indian government relaxed its control. Competition among large companies and small entrepreneurs subsequently drove down the costs of cell phones and air time to levels that laborers and farmers could afford. A “grey market” of cheap Chinese devices and street-corner servicers, plus the innovation of pre-paid plans, further expanded the market. The scale of the latent demand surprised even the vendors. If we appreciate, as do the authors, that the modern cell/smart phone combines a telephone with a telegraph, television, radio, phonograph, set of board games, bank account, identity papers, camera, and computer, all in a cheap, pocket-size device (and that this tool does not require literacy) then the cell phone’s tsunami-like diffusion is less puzzling if no less astonishing.

¹ <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx>

² <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44452#.UnKEg3Dc9X4>

The expansion of the industry itself and the employment it provides are direct consequences. Doron and Jeffrey describe the worlds of factory assemblers, technicians, high- and low-end retailers, largely self-trained repairmen, and airtime-selling petty shopkeepers. A key research question is whether the spread of cell phones, by cutting transaction costs and opening up new economic activities, raises a nation's income, especially for those at the bottom. The answer is not simple. Many observers have argued that farmers, fishermen, and the like can use cell phones to circumvent middlemen and find the best prices for their products, but as the authors point out, middlemen use similar cell phones to collude. The research seems to show that modest economic gains do follow cell phone diffusion.³

The social implications of that diffusion in India appear today less as established realities than as possibilities, albeit as enormous possibilities. Peasants once communicated at a distance mainly via cheap postcards dictated to and read by a literate intermediary; now they can talk directly, also cheaply, to almost anyone anywhere. Brides once lost regular communication with their parents and siblings after moving to their husbands' villages; now they can easily call home—or call anyone. Recognizing the threat, many mothers-in-law demand that the new brides leave their cell phones behind or hand them over. Everyone is aware of the new possibilities for sexual liaisons, an awareness accentuated by the florescence of cell phone pornography. Doron and Jeffrey argue that use of the cell phone is likely to alter gender relations more in India than elsewhere because those relations are “more defined and more rigid” there (p. 182). And yet, they conclude that, for all the possibilities, such changes have so far been more “incremental” than “revolutionary” (p. 177).

The authors of *The Great Indian Phone Book* are especially concerned with issues of power. They repeatedly suggest that, because India is so firmly hierarchical and because the implications of the cell phone's diffusion appear so asymmetrical (the privileged already had access to communications and

information) we should see a consequent “disruption” of traditional power. Doron and Jeffrey describe a political campaign, from the Left, that mobilized and motivated neighborhood organizers to victory; at the next election, the party on the Right did the same and returned to power. Here, too, substantial change in the form of the poor and down-caste literally and effectively speaking to power remains more prospect than reality.

This useful, balanced, and thought-provoking overview of cell phone proliferation in India argues, near the end, that it “accelerated, widened and deepened change in India” (p. 220), but the details in the preceding pages suggest a more cautious conclusion. Many of the big changes the authors espay—greater freedom for daughters-in-law—are still on the horizon. Also, demonstrating that such changes are indeed happening will require more and more systematic research. In addition, it is not yet clear whether the cell phone deserves singling out from the many other technological and economic developments that have roiled through India: highway construction, computerization, new outsourced jobs, television, and the like. Twenty years ago, for example, researchers argued that television and films were introducing notions of romance and personal choice into Indian marriages.⁴ “What's new about the cell phone?” is still an open question.

Yet, the prospect that diffusion of this Swiss knife of a technology is leading to meaningful social changes remains. Manuel Castells and Barry Wellman have described the tools of e-communications as empowering individuals to act on their own account, forming personal networks as alternatives to old-style, constricting communities. India, with its historically dense group structure of castes, rural tribes, extended kin groups, and tightly-controlled households, presents a great test case for cell phone “networked individualism.”

³ DOI:10.1080/00036846.2010.508730, DOI:10.1080/00220388.2012.709615

⁴ Derne, 2000. *Movies, Masculinity, and Modernity: An Ethnography of Men's Filmgoing in India*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press; <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/11/24/science/after-kinship-and-marriage-anthropology-discovers-love.html>.