This book is about mobile phones and their role in the lives of young, rural-to-urban migrant women in mainland China. Between 2005 and 2011, Cara Wallis, a linguistics and communication science scholar, conducted ethnographic research (observation, participant observation, interviews, analysis of 'mobile phone diaries') among women working at larger services enterprises.

Although the theory of a co-construction of technology and social position like gender, class, age, and place is widely accepted, there is a lack of research on new technology and social media in environments that have not attracted much attention. The circumstances of young rural women working in big cities in China form such an environment—the women's ownership and use of mobiles referring to their position in society. “The (...) book examines how (...) migrant women make meaning, enrich their lives, exercise agency and autonomy, and at times even reinforce their subordination through their engagement with mobile phones” (p. 62).

The book analyses the various social positions and circumstances young migrant women experience while discussing the structural and institutional constraints they are subject to and highlighting the intersection of social ascriptions (gender, class, age, and place). Wallis shows how the concept of suzhi (quality) positions rural migrant women as dagongmei (working little sister) in society. The concept of dagongmei and the discourse of suzhi “produce the mobile phone as a technology of the self” (p. 83) (chapter 2), the material and immaterial conditions lead to a characteristic setting of using mobiles. Being positioned as dagongmei—resulting in bad jobs, low wages and, consequently, a low living standard—determines the women's use of mobiles. On the other hand they actively position themselves and determine their use of mobiles as they try to adapt to another lifestyle and habitus in order to gain suzhi and improve their situation. Ownership and use of mobiles are strongly determined by the social situation of these women, above all by gender ideologies and economic status.

The author uses several analytical concepts to describe the interdependency of being positioned and positioning oneself in the interplay of suzhi and the ascription of dagongmei. These are—most importantly—inmobile mobility, assemblage and necessary convergence. Assemblage can be described as the whole setting, that is, all aspects that are relevant for the women's ownership and use of mobiles. Inmobile mobility refers to the function of mobiles
for these women: they are tools which are subject to their living conditions but also provide new opportunities. A mobile is a means to cope with or improve their situation (e.g. enabling relationships over distances to be maintained) and simultaneously stabilises the precarious circumstances (as the relationships are generally rural ones). As such, it is a tool of inclusion and exclusion at the same time. How this inclusion and exclusion, stabilisation and improvement function in different situations is thoroughly illustrated. *Necessary convergence* describes the global function of mobiles for these women: While smartphones are often discussed as tools which expand other devices, for migrant women they are the first and only device for all these functions (phone, camera, store, internet use, gaming); their mobile phones are an “expansive communication technology”—in contrast to a “supportive communication technology” for well-off users (p. 104).

The book tells a rich story about China and the use of mobiles by rural-to-urban migrant women. The author presupposes the co-construction of culture and technology and gives a detailed picture of how culture, living conditions and technology are interwoven and mutually dependent. The main chapters use different analytical foci, discussing mobiles as a means and a symbol of modern subjectivity in China (chapter 2), as a technology of social relationships and networking (chapter 3), as a tool of imaging and imagining the world (chapter 4) and as a technology used and misused in the context of work (chapter 5). The book suffers slightly from some structural flaws, the first half being rather unstructured and redundant. While that part of the book is not always easy and convenient to read, the second one is clearly structured, providing a clear analysis of concrete theoretical questions. Each chapter gives a theoretical basis, an introduction to the topic as well as to the history and socio-cultural conditions in China and an elaborate description of the women's lives in this respect. The study provides substantial empirical data and an abundant pool of theoretical discourses; theory is richly combined with practice. Cara Wallis refers to, applies, discusses, objects to, combines, discards, and modifies many theoretical concepts. Readers who want to learn more about much discussed and important theoretical concepts concerning the topics of the book as well as about their application in practice are recommended to read it.

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