

Position paper for the CHI 2000 workshop on 'Situated Interaction in Ubiquitous Computing' at the conference in The Hague, Netherlands, April 3rd, 2000.

What About the Situation at the Other End(s)?

On the Multifariousness of Situated Interaction in Ubiquitous Computing

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This position paper briefly presents a problem area that I have become increasingly aware of through several research projects during the last few years. Basically, it concerns the multi-situated nature of interaction. The 'inter' of 'interaction', after all, would not be relevant if there were not at least two connected instances of situated action involved. In my research, I find that the challenge of the multifariousness of computer-aided interaction to the design of information and communication technology (ICT) is becoming more and more apparent, as computers become more and more ubiquitous. Yet we still lack methods, models and metaphors to really grasp the problem and begin to deal with it effectively in design.

Using ethnographic field methods, including video recording and interaction analysis, I have focused, in my research, on how modern information and communication technology is used in public service one-stop shops. The aim has been to explore how ICT can be designed to successfully support communication, cooperation and 'knowing in action' in the front-office work of public administration.

During the later part of the nineties, as the use of Internet/intranet applications developed and spread, I began to focus on the possibility of integrating public information systems on-line with the continued design and development of advanced ICT for people working within public services. Ideas and inspiration have come partly from the expanding call center business.

What is happening now is, that the diversity of ways in which computer-supported interaction can take place is growing very rapidly, while the design and development of applications to efficiently support and make use of this diversity seems to be slow in the uptake.

How can we represent the multitude of different ways, and combinations of different ways, in which computer-aided interaction can take place today - from both ends/all directions? How can we make efficient use of this variety?

My main focus is on call centers and inter-active public services, but I would really like to share in the experiences of other researchers who have been working with a more direct focus on mobile and ubiquitous computing. What kinds of metaphors are developing with which to grasp the multi-situatedness of interaction? This is what I would like to learn more about, and discuss, at the workshop.

Bibliography and Background

I am at present a lecturer in the department of Human Work Science, at the University of Karlskrona/Ronneby in southern Sweden. Here, I teach within an interdisciplinary Master's program called *People, Computers and Work* (MDA is the Swedish acronym), combining Computer Science and Human Work Science in educating systems developers for the future. During the past years, I have been involved in research projects focusing on the use, design and continual support and development of computer support for public administration in one-stop shops, and the on-going integration of such systems with public electronic information systems (Eriksén, 1998, 1999). These projects were financed by the Swedish Council for Work Life Research. During 1996-98, I also participated in the EC project ATTACH (Advanced Trans-European Telematics Applications for Community Help, UR 1001), in which the University of Karlskrona/Ronneby was a partner.

The University of Karlskrona/Ronneby was founded in 1989. It is a young and small, but rapidly expanding university, with approx. 3,000 students and 330 employees. The main emphasis in both research and teaching is on ***IT in use*** – i.e. on information technology and how it is used.

References

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