

Community Practices and Locative Media

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ABSTRACT

The development of locative media applications is not simply about the physical location or social setting in which the interaction occurs, but rather about situating the media within a community of practice. This workshop will provide the environment for researchers to explore the potential for locative media applications to support community practices. The workshop will highlight the many open areas that require research attention, identify key problems that need to be addressed, and also discuss approaches for solving these issues. In particular the workshop will focus on appropriate methodologies for identifying requirements, evaluating behaviour and integrating locative media in specific real-world community structures.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

D.2.1 [Requirements/Specifications], H.5.3 [Group and Organization Interfaces]

General Terms

Performance, Design, Human Factors.

Keywords

Media, locating, community, ethnography, practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many studies have investigated how mobile computing can respond dynamically to the setting in which the interaction occurs. This refers to how such media can be ‘located’ within the setting. Locative media has tended to refer to media which respond directly to location and features of spatial settings [1] but in this paper we refer to locative media as those which are embedded within a social framework or setting. This setting may have space

as a key aspect of the interaction, but the social network or community in which it is embedded is the primary factor. A good deal has been written on the subject of social collaboration among individuals using communication devices, and what conditions or features are required to enable such activities. In a similar vein the work of Brown and colleagues, underline the importance of location in social practices in research where they investigate the settings in which people interact, and define the term “location-in-interaction”; an emotional, accountable and even moral part of family life [2]. A project by Giles *et al.* explores how place-based cultural knowledge can be shared using a guest and host framework [3]. A number of researchers have sought to investigate the existing qualities and features of community practices in order to provide insights into how media can be located within these existing structures. Taylor *et al.* describe a technology probe in the form of simple photo gallery aimed at understanding how digital displays can help support communities through the display of user-generated photos and videos [4].

With its focus on the situated nature of interaction and the social character of use, ethnography is a valuable method for understanding how mobile computing can become embedded within a wide variety of social settings. A number of researchers have developed a method originally proposed by Gaver, called cultural probes [5]. For instance Cheverst *et al.* approached the challenge of designing technology interventions for a residential care setting by combining the use of cultural probes, technology probes and participatory design workshops [6]. Doerner *et al.* have extended cultural probes with what they term infrastructure probes [7], in order to improve the collaboration between users and developers. Their infrastructure probes consist of a screenshot tool, a digital camera, Post-it’s etc. Alternatively, Buescher *et al.* propose a ‘bricolage’ approach [8] that involves users, participatory designers and ethnographers in a continuing cycle of design and revised work practice.

2. MOTIVATION

There has been much design of applications of locative media in urban settings, such as LBS, location-based gaming and mobile social software applications, but little which investigates the use and integration of such media within existing community structures and practices. There are many problems inherent in

studying an intangible concept such as community and how to evaluate whether a design has succeeded in supporting or improving notions of community [9]. Everyday social interactions within a community are not necessarily either explicit or even consciously recognized by those members of the community.

Mobile computing itself poses practical problems for data gathering and analysis. For instance, users are mobile; they move across extended physical areas, quickly at times, sometimes even running, which can make it difficult to document their action and capture video material. Furthermore, certain communities are inherently mobile which can further exacerbate the problems associated with effective ethnographic study. For example, Axup et al. encountered numerous difficulties when attempting to study a community of backpackers with a view to supporting appropriate technology design [10].

There are new challenges to established ethnographic methods from both standpoints: capturing the temporary nature of the practices with mobile media, but also extracting the intricate web of strong and weak social ties and relationships, in order to understand community practices is a challenging issue. Consequently there is still much room for development, and the full potential of such methodologies needs to be explored.

3. AIMS

- How can mobile media be located within existing communities and social settings?
- How can we find better ways of enabling and supporting locative media in community practices?
- How can mobile media foster communities and facilitate daily living, such as for communities in rural areas or the elderly?
- How can ethnographic methods inform and evaluate the place and integration of media in community settings?

4. AUDIENCE

The workshop seeks contributions from researchers from a diverse range of interdisciplinary fields, such as HCI, CSCW, sociology, architecture, ethnography and media studies.

5. WORKSHOP PLAN

Prior to the workshop we will widely publicise and generate enthusiasm about the workshop to a broad inter-disciplinary community through related email newsletters and at <http://www.uni-siegen.de/locatingmedia/workshop>. The actual workshop will consist of two stages, the first an exploratory session where participants will briefly present their position papers. The second session will encourage active discourse on the issues raised by the position papers, and will include a practical session. Extended versions of the papers will be considered for publication in an edited volume.

6. ORGANISER BACKGROUNDS

Katharine S. Willis's research interests lie in understanding how media is embedded in social settings. She has authored a number of publications in this area, and in 2007 she successfully co-organised a workshop at CHI entitled: Shared Encounters. She is currently a researcher on the Locating Media Project at University of Siegen.

Keith Cheverst is a senior lecturer at Lancaster University and one of his research interests is investigating the effectiveness of technology probe based approaches for supporting the inclusive design of ubicomp and mobile technologies that support coordination and community in a variety of settings. He has co-organised a number of workshops in this area.

Claudia Müller is a research assistant in the research group "CSCW in Organisations" and PhD candidate at the Graduate School "Locating Media", both at University of Siegen. As a cultural and medical anthropologist she works on ethnographically-informed technology development in complex and dynamic settings.

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