



Cornell University
Department of Communication

GPS Mobile Social Networks: Reexamining Our Interactions with Urban Space

Lee Humphreys

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Background

- Role of mobile social networks
- Larger multi-case study
- Preliminary findings from case study of GPS-based mobile social network



Research Questions

1. How might mobile social networks help to make connections between people in urban public spaces?
2. What is the nature of interactions that develop around mobile social networks?
3. How might these interactions change the way users think about and experience urban public spaces?



Case Study

- Sociallight
- Relies on social networks & co-location
- virtual “sticky notes”



Literature

- Social production of space
- Tagging



Method

- Naturalistic & interpretivist framework
- In-depth interviews users & founder
- Participant observation
- NYC is primary study site
- Preliminary findings



Participants

- Innovators
- Personal & professional interest in interactive social media



Findings

- 2 Themes emerged from data thus far
 1. Communication about place
 2. Communication through place



Communication *About* Place

- Sticky notes on places they frequent
 - Cafes, stores, restaurants, parks, etc.
- Mobile travel guide
 - Sticky notes all over the world



Communication *About* Place

If I've already tagged some stuff lets say around my apartment or in the area I might hang out in at night then when people come to visit me, then they would be able if they were on the service as well in theory, then they would be able to walk around town when I'm at work and they would be able to see "[Nathan] says this is a good coffee shop" and stop in. (Nathan)



Communication *About* Place

I actually used Facebook to coordinate the event, but created a specific [Socialight] channel for the event with stickies for all of the spots we were visiting on the crawl before the event. This enabled me to post a map of sorts of our route for those of us who were going to attend the event but wanted to either meet up later or tell some friends where we'd be. Having already created the stickies made it easy for us to make comments on the stickies during the crawl, so we wouldn't forget what we wanted to say about them. (Hannah)



Communication *Through* Place

- Place-based story telling
- Tying information and stories to location
- Engage with stories through place
- Engage with place through stories



Communication *Through* Place

I would tell them to tell stories about their childhood because everyone has stories about their childhood. These stories aren't necessarily big enough to be a biography, but they're tied to place. Like there's this one story about where a woman got in a car accident. Like no one would be interested in that just to hear it, but if you're at that place then it's interesting. (Neville)



Communication *Through* Place

Central park is a place where lots of people have put stickies. But I wanted my story to be different. So I told a story about a girl. This was last summer and I was kinda into her. It was maybe only the second time I had met her. And we went for a run together and then we got a Jamba Juice together and had a great time. Then she never returned my calls. So that was about me telling a secret. Because all stories are secrets. And some you keep private and some you make public. And there's just something about making a secret public. (Neville)



Discussion

- Preliminary findings
- People create meaning with a GPS-based mobile social network
- More themes will emerge



Discussion

- Goal to create contextualized communication
- Context here = location
- Location aware vs. location enhanced