

# **Managing Mobility: Location-Based Services and the Politics of Mobile Spaces**

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# Overview

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- Uncovering the politics of mobility
- Why look at Location-based services?
- Convergence
- Standardization
- Flexible Organizational Responses
- Conclusions

# Location-based Services

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[Location-Based Services] are technologies that meet three specific criteria. They can pinpoint locations, they can report these continuously and they can do it in real time. So while RFID (radio frequency identification) and Wi-Fi present related issues, only those services that can give coordinates by calculating the longitude and latitude of a person's position are the ones considered location technologies in the sense used here. They can point to the exact place where the person is and communicate this in real time to other persons or agencies, on an ongoing uninterrupted basis (Lyon, Mamura and Perpoff , 2005:6).

# Converging Technologies

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QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

(Source: Dawson et al., 2007)

# Convergence cont...

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“In plain English, we are unscrambling the GPS signal. It's rare that someone can press a button and make something you own instantly more valuable, but that's exactly what's going to happen today. All the people who bought a GPS receiver for a boat or a car, or their riding lawn mower or whatever, to use in business and in recreation, are going to find that they're suddenly 10 times more accurate as of midnight tonight.” (Dr. Neal Lane)

# Standardization: The case of E-911

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Put simply, mobile phones present a problem for emergency services because it is difficult, perhaps impossible in some cases, to determine the precise location of callers in distress when they are unable to provide such information orally to the dispatch operator (Gow, 2005: 77).

# Standardization, cont.

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- State vs. Market regulation
- “Corporate responsibility”
- “Wouldn't it be the best [public relations] for the wireless companies to put this on the front burner and really make it happen?”
- “A lot of the carriers feel the business case for E911-based commerce services is not clear. They haven't rushed (to adopt it) [...] Will you make money? Yes. But the cost of building the network is not trivial”

# Flexible Organizational Responses

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*mFleet* offers fleet managers and operators real-time automated vehicle mapping, intelligent management reporting, and vehicle diagnostic (health) reports. Using *mFleet's* Locator hardware with Global Positioning System (GPS) and engine diagnostic technology, messages from vehicles connect in real-time to *mFleet* Quadrant, a secure, Web-based hosted mapping and reporting software, over the Rogers Wireless network (“Rogers introduces mFleet,” 2007).



# Flexibility cont.

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- “Gain control. Stay connected. Increase sales. Find your way”
- Profitability and liability
- Logic, rationality and efficiency are reinscribed onto the model of flexibility.

# Conclusions

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- “mobility has been the object of fear and suspicion, a human practice that threatens to undo many of the achievements of modern rationality and ordering” (Cresswell, 2006: 20; see also Packer, 2008).
- For every movement, there is an equal opportunity to track it.
- Thank you!