

Editorial

Communicating place, space and mobility[☆]

1. Introduction

The concepts ‘place’, ‘space’ and ‘mobility’ have been used and theorized for a relatively long time in human and cultural geography. Although contentious (Massey, 2005), ‘place’ is often the more appropriate concept within a suitable framework for understanding embodied interactions within their physical environment. ‘Space’ usually refers to the structural, geometrical qualities of a physical environment. Place, on the contrary, includes the dimensions of lived experience, interaction and use of a space by its inhabitants.¹ Although the literature on place and space is, of course, substantial, the sophisticated and subtle understandings of these concepts have not featured substantively in, for example, linguistic pragmatics,² discourse studies and the sequential analysis of (conversational) interaction. Indeed, until recently there has been very little research overtly published on how ‘place’ or ‘space’ (and mobility) is constituted in social interaction. Important early work can be found, for example, in Goffman’s *Behaviour in Public Places* (1963) and *Relations in Public* (1971), as well as research in the analysis of talk and embodied interaction in spatial configurations (see Goodwin, 1986; Heath, 1986; Kendon, 1990; Schegloff, 1972). More recently there has been an upsurge in interactional and discourse analytic studies of how embodied actors communicate, interact and coordinate their activities in complex multimodal environments and places (see, for example, Goodwin, 2000; Luff et al., 2000; Mondada, 2003; Norris, 2004). Other important research on discourse and space/place includes Scollon and Scollon’s *Discourses in Place* (2003), as well as Markus and Cameron’s *The Words Between the Spaces: Buildings and Language* (2002), and Emmison and Smith’s *Researching the Visual: Images, Objects, Contexts and Interactions in Social and Cultural Inquiry* (2000). Several recent articles also discuss the concepts of space/place in relation to language use and discourse, including Blommaert et al. (2003, 2005), Curry (2002), Danziger (1998), Dixon and Durrheim (2000, 2004), Jensen (2006), Jones (2005), Kaplan (2003), Keating (2000), Keating et al. (2008), Laurier (2001), Lemke (2005), LeVine (2007), Modan (2007), Mondada (2002, 2005), Myers (2006), Richardson and Jensen (2003), Saint-Georges (2004), and Stokowski (2002). As a result of this minor ‘spatial turn’ in some quarters of discourse studies and pragmatics, ‘place’ has come to be seen as a site or network of mediated activities, where language, people, artifacts and technologies are entangled together.

More recently, a ‘mobility’ turn has also swept the social sciences (Adey, 2006; Green, 2002; Laurier, 2003; Sheller and Urry, 2003, 2006; Urry, 2007). As Cresswell (2006:1) has noted, although it is broadly acknowledged that mobility is central to what it is to be human, little is known of what it means in practice. He continues that mobility “is a kind of

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¹ Useful discussions of the fundamental concepts can be found in Barnett and Low (2004), Cresswell (2004), Harrison et al. (2004), Holloway and Hubbard (2001), Hubbard et al. (2004), and Massey (2005).

² In the cognitive linguistics literature, much of the published research concerning place, space and movement has dealt with spatial deixis, spatial metaphors, spatial cognition, conceptualization of motion events or paths, and so on (for one review, see Levinson, 1996). Other important work includes the studies of Lakoff & Johnson (and Chilton) on metaphorical conceptions of space in language (eg. the container metaphor).

blank space that stands as an alternative to place, boundedness, foundations, and stability.” In a globalising world, discourse is increasingly on the move. For example, in the hectic life of a “networked individual” (Wellman, 2002), mediated action takes place on the move, in vehicles, in transit, while walking, as well as in and through mobile devices and ambient computing environments (see Ling and Pedersen, 2005; Ling, 2008; Katz and Aakhus, 2002; Brown et al., 2002; Hamill and Lasen, 2005). Mobile workers, commuters, drivers and teenagers all have the possibility to mediate and coordinate their actions and activities at a distance in new ways (Brown and O’Hara, 2003; Laurier and Philo, 2002). Consequently, textual artifacts and multimodal semiotic aggregates become mobile mediational means. New approaches and concepts are needed to deal with this added complexity, especially as it impacts on the types of social interactions that occur. Indeed, more research on how mobility affects and constitutes our everyday practices is needed, especially because mobility is becoming one of the defining features of globalization in a world in which many of our communicative practices are now conducted while on the move.³

In reference to the question of mobility, we can ask: what kind of a semiotic or interactional resource is mobility? Is ‘mobility’ itself a resource, or does mobility provide a continuing set of contingent resources (perspectival semiotic fields) in the environment? And, thus, is it so that because of the conditions of ‘mobility’ we have to consider and deal with continuously changing material, pragmatic and interactional resources in a qualitatively different way compared to what we find in a static situation (cf. the hopscotch grid and the Munsell chart in Goodwin, 2000)? Mobility also affects indexical expressions: the interactional contingencies change as a result of the mobility of participants, and they become fleeting and temporary, even more so than in ‘static’ situations. Consequently, we have to deal with the contingent resources in a timely fashion if we want to draw on them, because the relevance of the resource in the here-and-now is transient – and often unstable. In fact, it is the here-ness of the ‘here-and-now’ that has become unmoored in a mobile world. For instance, even though we draw from a range of mediational means to mediate action, being mobile while performing the action can itself force us to modify the trajectory of our (joint) actions.

2. Mediated discourse and conversational interaction

The aim of this special issue has been to bring together new research in the broad field of pragmatics that investigates place, mediated discourse and embodied interaction, with a special focus on space, mobility and the body. Thus, the special issue highlights research in the following topical areas:

- Interacting bodies in material-semiotic places. The study of body movements, interacting bodies (Kendon, 2004) and objects-in-interaction in the situated configuration of material-semiotic space and virtual places.
- Discourses on the move. The study of the relationship between mobility and other resources (talk, embodiment, text, signs, etc.) by which interlocutors interact in mobile spaces or environments.
- Communication in situated mobile-technology and gaming environments. The study of talk and social interaction in technology-rich environments, in which the communications technology is rapidly disappearing into the ‘background’ environment of human action or onto the body of the actor and their clothing in everyday places.
- Mediating discourse in a distributed nexus of practice. The study of how communicative practices are increasingly distributed and networked across diverse media, actors, sites and places.

Contributions focus specifically on such semiotically rich places as police interrogation rooms, television studios, specially designed reality TV environments, moving automobiles, and public pedestrian streets, as well as the situated use of mobile communications-technology in urban spaces. Research approaches that can potentially inform an analysis of such places can be grouped together into three relevant areas: studies of social interaction, studies of mediated discourse and studies of technology-mediated workplaces.

First, from ethnomethodology, conversation analysis (CA), discursive psychology and interaction analysis we have inherited a rich set of qualitative tools to analyse the fine-grained organization of everyday conversations and institutional talk. Early studies of place include Schegloff (1972) and Psathas (1979). Recently, however, researchers

³ Recent work on mobility and communication includes Brown et al.’s *Wireless World: Social and Interactional Aspects of the Mobile Age* (2002), Katz & Aakhus’ *Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance* (2002) and most recently Ling’s *New Tech, New Ties: How Mobile Communication Is Reshaping Social Cohesion* (2008). In regard to the emerging field of mobility studies, there is even less discourse analytic, interactional or ethnomethodological research than in place studies (though see Brown and Laurier, 2005; Crabtree, 2000; Laurier and Philo, 2006; Laurier et al., 2001; Psathas, 1976, 1979, 1986a,b; Psathas and Kozloff, 1976; Weilenmann, 2003).

are finding that they are drawn to more complex environments in which talk is only one activity (or dimension of the action), and that their methodology requires special tools to analyse video recordings and other data streams (Broth, 2008; Goodwin, 2007, 2006; McIlvenny, 2008; Relieu et al., 2007). In addition, the relationships between sequential and spatial interaction, as well as between situated local interaction and action-at-a-distance, are coming to the fore. More will be said about the analysis of space as an interactional phenomenon below.

Second, from the fields of discourse analysis, communication studies and interpersonal communication, we see a plethora of critical and descriptive methods for analysing spoken and written communication, yet it is clear that much research has tended to focus on written text as a discrete object, while ignoring the relationship between the discursive and the non-discursive. Additionally, social semiotics and studies of visual communication suggest that semiotic modalities are richer than once thought, and their complex interrelationships are not necessarily hierarchical. Furthermore, the concepts of space and place have not yet played a significant role in theory and analysis. A step in such a direction is however Scollon and Scollon's (2003) work on *geosemiotics*, which has brought a new awareness of the importance of place to language as discourse and vice versa (see also Benwell and Stokoe, 2006; Stokowski, 2002; Scollon, forthcoming). The bringing together of the 'interaction-placement order' with place semiotics and visual semiotics (and the historical body) into a coherent framework to analyse the geosemiotics system breathes new life into social semiotics (Duncan, 1996). The Scollons draw upon the work of geographers such as Hägerstrand (1975), Harvey (2000) and Tuan (1977, 1991).

Third, from workplace studies, interaction design, computer-supported cooperative work (CSCW) and computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL), we find that researchers are increasingly using ethnographic methods to help design better interfaces, technologies and tools (Bardram and Bossen, 2005; Büscher, 2005, 2006; Snowdon et al., 2004; Turner and Turner, 2006). There is much to be found in these fields – as well as online gaming and what is known as 'locative media' – that is preoccupied with the design and use of new technology in spaces of consumption, leisure or work (Bell et al., 2006). Examples of pertinent studies can be found in Heath and Luff (2000), Luff et al. (2000), Snowdon et al. (2004) and Turner and Davenport (2005). Other studies that focus on computer-mediated discourse and communication often tend to assume a frictionless virtual cyberspace, in which considerations of place, presence and belonging are deemed irrelevant to communication and social interaction. This is, of course, rarely the case (cf. Boden and Molotch, 1994; Jones, 2005).

3. Interactional space

The articles in this special issue are representative of an emerging area of interdisciplinary research that often combines the three approaches above to study how place, space and mobility is communicated in complex multimodal environments and places (see also Nevile, 2004; Suchman, 1996; Whalen et al., 2002). The authors demonstrate that a more sophisticated understanding of space and place in pragmatics is possible; for example, how an awareness and experience of place and mobility can help us make sense of the role of language and discourse mediated in collaborative and social interaction. All of the contributions to this special issue are informed by the idea that space is an interactional phenomenon, and thus to differing degrees the authors draw upon ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (Have, 2007) in one way or another. They all contend that both 'place' and 'space' can be studied as members' phenomena, i.e. through the ways in which participants can be observed to orient to these phenomena in interaction. Participants are always and unavoidably 'accountable-in-a-place'. A participant is always somewhere, and therefore it is always possible for that position in space to be made accountable (describable, intelligible) in her or his interaction with others. "Order at all points" (Sacks, 1984:22) can thus be expected to concern not only the organization of turns, sequences, gaze and gestures as mutually informing orders of interaction emerging in time. All these practices may also be understood by reference to the fact that they are performed in a particular place or in a particular space. An adequate description of the interaction order will then, obviously, also have to take the spatial dimension of human interaction into account (cf. Lenney and Sercombe, 2002). All studies in this special issue show, in one way or another, how space (in very different but always 'natural' settings) can be relevant to the sequential unfolding of situated interactions.

In one very basic sense, space is of course 'already there' before the participants enter the scene. However, as a *social* phenomenon – and it is as such that it can be manifestly relevant for participants to an interaction – it has to be locally *accomplished*. And just as turns and sequences are reflexively configured (formed) in and for particular moments of interaction (see Goodwin, 1979), members' space is fundamentally an interactional and dynamic phenomenon. Considered this way, space is thus not something that can exist before an interaction begins and that

participants just step into, as it were (cf. Laurier, 2005 for a critique of “the bucket theory of space”), but rather something that needs to be actively accomplished by the participants as they move, coordinate their actions and encounter each other and a range of nonhuman artifacts and materialities.

If space is accomplished, one may ask just how it is accomplished. Since (prospective) co-present participants may use the full range of spatialities and embodiments (including talk) for this achievement, it is crucial that the researcher documents these multi-modal practices. This is why most of the papers in this special issue are based on (sometimes, multiple and synchronised) audiovisual recordings (Laurier and Philo, 2006; Mondada, 2006), which permit the repeated and detailed study of the “seen but unnoticed” (Garfinkel, 1967[1984]) interactional detail that may well be discovered to be relevant for the interaction.

Seen from the point of view of interaction in everyday life, places and locales consist of intelligible or meaningful material arrangements that are routinely tied to the embodied performance of particular activities. Rather than being constituted within a single semiotic modality, human action is built through the co-articulation in space of aggregates of signs and artifacts in different media which mutually elaborate each other, and in so doing become environments for each other (Goodwin, 2000). Thus, this special issue attempts to contribute to the development of better theories and analyses of the interrelations between language use, mediated discourse, communicative practices, social interaction, mobilities, multimodalities, spatial configurations, infrastructures and architectures. To this end, particular notions of space, place and mobility are investigated in this special issue, such as domestic space, public space, virtual space, audiovisual space and automobile space. And specific concepts are deployed, such as unimodality, co-presence, co-location, co-proximity, non-presence, destination, ‘being-on-the-move’, itinerary, spatial formation, ‘discipline-in-action’ and interspatiality.

The contributions to this special issue share what might be called a ‘praxeological’ view on human interaction, according to which the observable phenomena that participants produce are seen as first and foremost serving the purposes of action (Mondada, 2006). One may ask for what practical purposes different spaces and places can be accomplished. Presumably, the constitution of different spaces is hardly ever a goal in itself, but rather a way to support and make possible other and more focussed activities and projects. This special issue offers descriptions of very different actions and activities conducted in different cultural environments (Finland, France, Japan, Sweden, Tanzania, and the UK). The successful accomplishment of these actions and activities relies on the constitutive function of diverse spaces, places and mobilities as both affordances and crucial resources. The activities in question, which are often ignored by analysts, can be as diverse as getting on and off minibuses in Tanzania, or moving into a position to ask verbal directions (itineraries) from a stranger on the street, or disciplining one’s own child in a ‘home away from home’ on a highly mediated reality TV programme. To conclude this editorial, we briefly introduce the eight contributions to this special issue, all of which investigate how we communicate place, space and mobility in the contemporary world.

4. Contributions

In the first article, Liz Stokoe offers a ‘classic’ sequential analysis of a recurrent verbal construction in tape-recorded British police interrogations, the “for the benefit of the tape” (FBT) or “for the tape” (FT) phrases produced by officers while interrogating suspects. Basing her analysis on the audio-recordings that police officers routinely produce as part of their work, she demonstrates how FBT/FT-phrases are explicitly oriented to the fact that the interrogation, taking place between co-present participants using different multi-modal resources of their bodies, is audio-recorded and needs to be understandable in the single audio modality by other parties in the legal process. More specifically, Stokoe shows that the FBT/FT formulation orients to issues of ‘place’, ‘co-presence’ and ‘non-presence’ in two different ways: First, the use of the FBT/FT formulation in general is a practice that displays an orientation to possible distal listeners who are not physically present in the place where current talk is being produced. Second, a more specific feature of the FBT/FT formulation practice is that it is frequently used for describing the design or physical features of a place for the tape (and for distal, non-present listeners). Consequently, her detailed analyses of a collection of cases show how FBT/FT-phrases can be systematically produced and exploited to manage accountability in relation to both the local participants and the distant and future audiences for whom they collaboratively ‘translate’ their multi-modal interrogation into a uni-modal one.

In their article, Ilkka Arminen and Alexandra Weilenmann analyze mobile phone conversations in Finland and Sweden. Drawing on Charles Goodwin’s notion of *contextual configuration* (Goodwin, 2000), they ask: How do the locally available contexts at either end of the mobile connection figure in the accomplishment of a common conversational context and accountable talk between the two distant and mobile interlocutors? A close analysis of a

corpus of audio-recorded mobile phone conversations allows the authors to describe some of the ways in which ordinary conversational actions, such as invitations and offers, are projected and produced under mobile circumstances. They find that action formation in mobility may be done in specific ways, reflecting the contingencies and resources offered by the mobile conditions of their production. In this way, for instance, informing the other about being in a nice place can be treated conversationally as projecting a subsequent invitation.

Christian Licoppe's article continues with the themes of communication, presence and mobility in highly mediated environments that were raised above. He analyses the way social gatherings are collaboratively accomplished in two different settings with two different modes of communication: routine mobile phone conversations and rich-texting in a location-aware mobile game (Licoppe and Inada, 2006). His focus is on how participants produce mutually ratified co-proximity events. In routine phone conversations participants begin by undertaking co-localisation work – the collaborative establishing of their locations – which provides them with opportunities to assess their mutual locations as some form of proximity. He shows how such co-proximity events achieved within talk-in-interaction enact the relevance of a future face-to-face encounter, and project an invitation to meet as a relevant next in the interactional sequence (see Arminen and Weilenmann, 2009). In the location aware mobile game, the game infrastructure and interfaces afford the discovery of co-proximity by providing players with occasions to see the presence of their icons on a common digital map. Players treat such a display as a form of mediated co-proximity, with the same interactional and sequential consequences as in mobile phone conversations. This article weaves together the issues of mobility and sociality, as well as proximity and hospitality.

Mobility and place are central themes also in the article by Pentti Haddington and Tiina Keisanen. Studying car driving (Laurier et al., 2008) and more specifically the conversational processes involved in deciding where to go and how to get to that point, what they call 'route negotiation', the authors focus on the importance of mobility for those processes. In a similar manner to Arminen and Weilenmann, they describe mobility not so much as an external contextual factor but rather as something that is reflexively integrated in the sequential organization of the unfolding interaction. Perceived from the inside of a moving car, the external environment constantly passes by as a result of the manoeuvres of the driver. And in so far as a particular location or motion itself may be used as a contextual resource for the talk involved in route selection, both drivers and passengers need to carefully coordinate their actions within this mobile context. The paper thus describes some of the ways in which locations and mobility can inform the projection, initiation, and production of sequentially organised actions in moving cars.

In his article, Sigurd D'hondt examines situational space and mobility by studying how people (commuters, conductors and drivers) jointly negotiate an exit from a *daladala* vehicle (public transportation) in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. On the face of it, exiting the vehicle in this low-tech environment is preceded by a relatively straightforward interactional sequence. First, the conductor calls the stop; second, passengers respond by voicing their intention to exit the vehicle at the next stop; and finally, the conductor mediates this information to the driver. However, although the drop-off sequence seems relatively simple, D'hondt specifically shows that in order to successfully accomplish the activity, the participants inside the vehicle have to orient to and act on different spaces simultaneously. These spaces include the interior of the cabin, the external space (i.e. the relative location of the bus with respect to the next stop), and the surrounding traffic. Moreover, because the vehicle is on the move, the understandings of space are continually and reflexively reproduced and renegotiated (see Haddington and Keisanen, 2009).

Lorenza Mondada's article refocuses our analytical attention on those foundational moments before social interaction and conversation proper take place. She deals with the multimodal and spatial arrangements of the participants within pre-beginning and opening sequences, i.e. sequences taking place before the actual opening of a social interaction and achieving the conditions for an imminent opening. Her investigation of a corpus of video recorded encounters in public places and between unknown persons engaged in itinerary description demonstrates that the mutual arrangement of the interactional space is crucial, emerging progressively from the participants' transition from moving to standing, and their transformation from unfocused pedestrians to focused would-be-imminent-co-participants. She systematically describes the identification of the other as a potential interactional partner for the itinerary description, the methodical organization of convergent trajectories in space, the exchange of first mutual glances, and the establishment and stabilization of an initial interactional space – all taking place before or during the very first words produced in the encounter.

Mathias Broth's article draws on complex audiovisual data recorded in the television control room of a French live interview programme. His analysis focuses on the interactional and cognitive challenges posed by the complex spatial configuration of this multimodal form of interaction, and how studio personnel deal with these challenges. Broth shows how the participants inside the control room are required to form an understanding of the spatial configuration in the

studio based on what they see on the bank of TV screens in front of them, which only provide a partial view of the studio, and on what they hear from the loudspeakers. He describes how the people in the control room rely on a shared orientation to this technological interface and their relative positions in the control room space in order to negotiate a shared understanding of who is talking, who is talking to whom and where participants are located within the distant studio ecology. Such an understanding is directly relevant for directing camera operators to the appropriate locations inside the studio and for broadcasting specific shots of relevant participants in order to communicate an appropriate visual representation of the interaction in the studio for the audience. Broth's article illuminates how people do not just act in 'space', but through their embodied actions continuously and dynamically orient to the relevant features of it, and construct and reconstruct it.

Lastly, Paul McIlvenny's article introduces the reader to the communicative practices of 'discipline-in-action' in a reality television programme that inculcates better parenting practices for reigning in unruly children. He explores how a family assembles itself spatially and coordinates its activities across the lived architectures of the house they are temporally living in, and how a child is disciplined spatially in and through the embodied activities and talk of the parents. His approach draws upon mediated discourse analysis and conversation analysis in order to analyse the phenomenon of the 'time-out', a generalised 'technique' of parentcraft that is used to discipline young children who are misbehaving. He argues that the 'time-out' is a local, emergent and negotiated accomplishment of disciplinary practices of temporal and spatial constraint that involve embodied (inter)action, furniture, objects, and the lived architecture of the domestic sphere.

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