

Selected Readings from

Plans and Situated Actions

Lucy Suchman

“Navigation”

Making the distinction between planning and situated action: two navigators.

There are three ways of looking at purposeful action. Simply stated, purposeful action may be:

- (1) Learned and subject to cultural variation
- (2) Dependent on the nature of the activity and level of skill
- (3) Situated actions in any case.

Suchman will take the #3. In fact, she maintains that regardless of the degree of planning, purposeful actions are situated actions or, in other words, actions taken in the particular context of fundamentally concrete and embodied circumstances.

Therefore, circumstances of action can never be fully anticipated and are continuously changing. Situated actions are essentially *ad hoc*.

*Let's find ways to describe our *ad hoc* methods!

“Interactive Artifacts”

Defining interactivity and looking at its application to artificial intelligence within an historical context.

Interaction now, as of 1988, is used to signify communication among humans and -this is a big “and”- between humans and machines. Within the human/machine rhetorical situation there is implied a **mutual intelligibility** or **shared understanding**.

How have we arrived at this newly connoted version of interaction?

1 Automata and Cognitive Science

Abstract notions of “the mind” and “intelligence,” so fundamental to cognitive science, have led us to a concept of constructing intelligent artifacts. Now there is no reason to automatically “draw a principled boundary between people...and certain computing machines.”

Thanks cognitive science!

2 The Idea of Human Computer Interaction

Thanks in large part to the rapid reactivity of contemporary (1988) computers we are furnished with a “character of computer.” With its familiar linguistic interface and designed reactions, humans are more likely to view themselves as engaged in interaction with, as opposed to performing actions upon, a computer. It has been reified as an entity.

3 Self-Explanatory Artifacts

With this “character of computer” in mind, there are practical and theoretical implications. Practical in that we expect the computer to be able to explain itself and theoretical in that we may, erroneously, believe the computer to have intent.

3.1 The Computer as an Artifact Designed for a Purpose

An object’s design doesn’t always convey its purpose. Computers are self-explicating machines. “Computer-based coaches.”

3.2 The Computer as an Artifact Having Purposes

The designer’s objective is to imbue the machine accountable, rational behavior and this includes behavior that is responsive to an other’s actions.