

Strauss' theory in CSCW – What is COOPRATIVE and WORK?

Schmidt & Bannon (1992): *Taking CSCW Seriously*

Fitzpatrick et al. (1995): *Work, Locals and Distributed Social Worlds*

Gasser (1986): *The Integration of Computing and Routine Work*

Social (opportunistic, ad hoc, local) <-> technological (formal, structure, general)

The three texts for to day use Strauss's work to describe **the social** in relation to what CSCW research should be concerned about *and* in relation to how technology can be developed in such a way that it supports human action/interaction in cooperative work situations.

The texts are concerned with mapping out **WORK, cooperative work** and they pinpoint several types and different ways that 'constitute' *work* e.g.:

In Glasser:

- Task chains (production sequence + organized into lines of work)
- Production lattices (coordinated structure of intersecting task chains) = ecology of work relationship
- Lines of work

Several types of work:

- **Primarily work** (addresses the specific agendas of work situations), **articulation work** (see below for a definition), computing work (work production, use)
- Work situation = the context in which tasks take place (agenda, resources, person/group, time, place)

Three strategies for accommodation to computing slip – adaptation work:

- Fitting work (planned changes, adjustment, negotiation), augmenting (additional work to make up for misfits), working around (intentionally alternative use)

Schmidt & Bannon and Fitzpatrick et al. continues the list with the following concepts:

- Interdependence in work (more than sharing the same resource, its concerns a reliability and mutual dependence in work).
 - Extraneous activities:
 - Mediating, controlling (secondary activities) +
 - Articulate (divide, allocate, coordinate, schedule, mesh, interrelate)
- Actions/interactions/interactants -> definitions to be found p. 3 in Fitzpatrick et al.
- Social worlds (interactive unit that arises when a number of individuals strive to act in some collective way, Ibid.:4)

Why CSCW? – Schmidt & Bannon

Work organizations require information systems that support:

- Coordination of distributed decision making
- Activities across
- Professional boundaries
- Intra and extra networks

Common information spaces “that allow meaning of shared objects to be debated and resolved.” p. 27. In this way a CIS can be characterized as negotiated and established by the actors involved - “objects must be interpreted and assigned meaning, meanings that are achieved by specific actors and specific occasions of use” Ibid. A shared database is, as such, not always a CIS. Ibid.

KEYWORDS:

Work

Articulation work: reorganize, maintenance, establish, meshing, “a kind of supra-type of work” (Schmidt & Bannon, p.18, quoting Strauss1985) + Glasser p. 211

Coordination

Situated actions: In addressing the notion of ‘situated actions’ Suchman (1987) advocates for acknowledging actions as emergent, local achievements, rather than as bound by the specifications of abstract representations (plans). Thus, actions are ‘situated’ rather than rational (pre)determined¹

DISCUSSION:

How come that so much ‘work’ is put into defining and describing work/cooperative work? – How come this central role of work?

What is CSCW?

What is CW?

What is work?

At the previous lecture we learned about Activity Theory

* What is Fitzpatrick et al. saying about AT? p. 7

* Fitzpatrick et al. advocate Strauss’ work, what do they find fruitful about it?

¹ “I have introduced the term *situated action*. That term underscores the view that every course of action depends in essential ways upon its material and social circumstances. Rather than attempting to abstract action away from its circumstances and represent it as a rational plan, the approach is to study how people use their circumstances to achieve intelligent action. Rather than build a theory of action out of a theory of plans, the aim is to investigate how people produce and find evidence for plans in the course of situated action. More generally, rather than subsume the detailed of action under the study of plans, plans are subsumed by the larger problem of situated action. The view of action that ethnomethodology recommends is neither behavioristic, in any narrow sense of that term, nor mentalistic.” (Suchman 1987:50, original emphasis). Lucy A. Suchman (1987): “Plans and Situated Actions. The Problems of Human-Machine communication”. Cambridge University Press.