

Concepts in cscw: awareness

readings:

mandatory:

- Heath, C. and Luff, P.: *Collaborative activity and technological design: Task coordination in London Underground control rooms*, 1991
- Heath, C. et al: *Configuring Awareness*, 2010

additional readings:

- Dourish, P. & V. Belotti: *Awareness and Coordination in Shared Workspaces*, 1992.
- Schmidt, K.: *The Problem with 'Awareness': Introductory Remarks on 'Awareness in CSCW'*, 2010.

questions:

1. how do Heath et al. define “awareness”?
2. why is awareness interesting to CSCW?
3. in your physically distributed group-writing exercise: did you manage “to mutually monitor each others conduct”? What did you do to make your collaborator aware of your actions? Which actions and why did you select these?
4. Heath & Luff talk about “surreptitious monitoring” and “rendering tasks visible” as ways of providing awareness in the London Under-ground Control Rooms. Do these concepts fit your experience?
5. what do Heath et al. refer to as “centres of coordination”? How do the studies of such centres affect our understanding of awareness?
6. Heath et al. discuss how individuals have colleagues see an object in the environment in a particular way as a strategy for producing relevant action by all. Do you have examples of such awareness actions?
7. Heath et al. discuss “figuring the significance of events” – do you have examples of successful (or unsuccessful) cases of this?
8. discuss the implications for design from Heath et al.’s understanding of awareness.

extra questions:

- Heath et al. tells a story from an operating theatre where people with different professional ranks collaborate, and where the highest ranked professional is addressed with “delicacy”. Have you seen examples of such interactions?
- what is “distributed cognition” (Heath & Luff)?
- what are Schmidt’s arguments against seeing awareness as “the tacit and seamless integration of ongoing cooperative activities” (p. 290)?
- what are Schmidt’s arguments for “shared feedback” as an alternative to increasing awareness?
- Dourish & Belotti discuss levels of awareness – what are they and what do the levels focus on?
- can you give examples of what Schmidt calls “appropriate obtrusiveness” (p. 292) in a (cooperative) work situation?
- use Schmidt’s four researchable questions on p. 294-5 to discuss Dourish & Belotti’s awareness concepts