



Exploring Transitions and Work-Life Balance in the Digital Era

Research in Progress: Digital Work, Digital Life

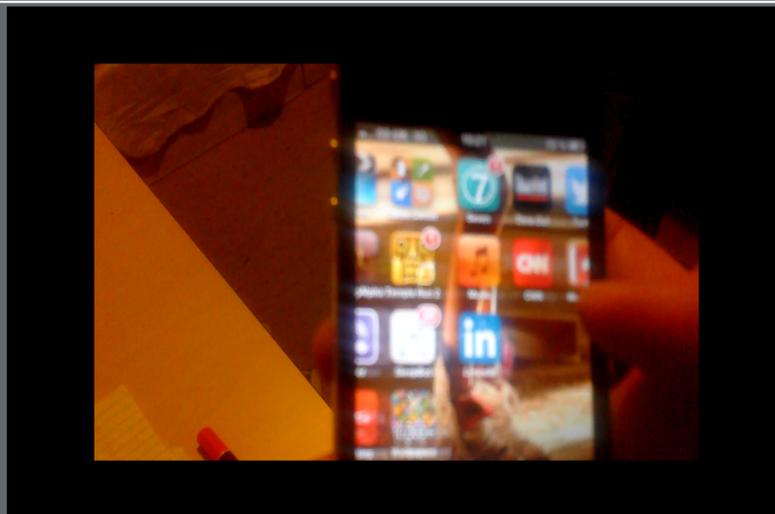
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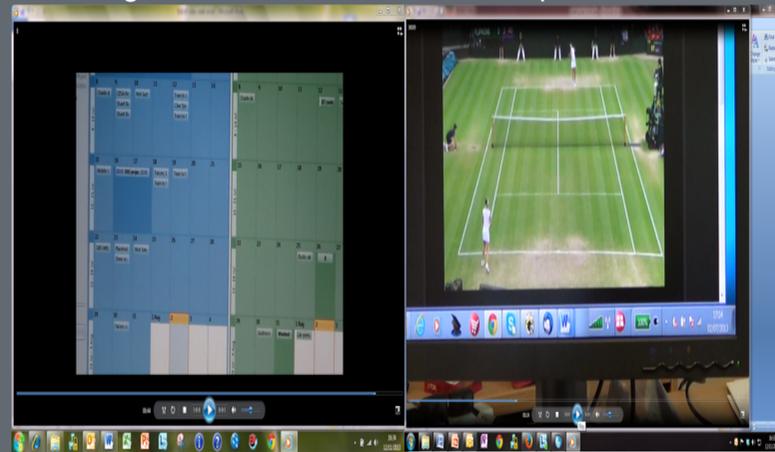
**The Open University, UK

BACKGROUND AND AIMS

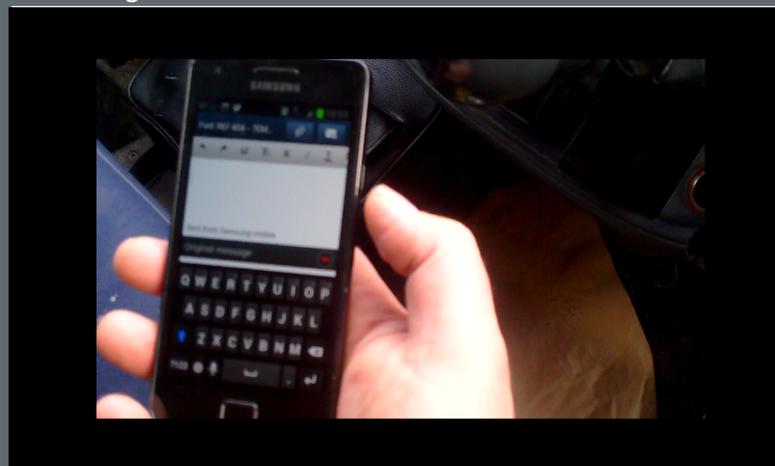
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are known for their impact on individuals, teams, organizations and societies at large (e.g. Panteli, 2009)
- Boundary theory within the literature on Work-Life Balance (WLB) argues that individuals perform different roles (e.g. colleague, parent) in the different domains of their lives (e.g. work, family) (Burke, 2006)
- Different types of transitions (or switches) between and across those different roles and domains have been identified (e.g. micro/macro, physical/psychological) (Ashforth, 2000)
- However, it is not clear how the rising popularity and use of ICTs influences those transitions between roles and also WLB more generally
- This research aims to understand whether ICTs support the management of more flexible transitions—creating more permeable boundaries and a less segmented persona—or whether they encourage leakage across boundaries and difficult identity management tasks
- These aims form part of a multidisciplinary research agenda which is described below.



Digital switch between work and personal life



Blending work-life boundaries in the virtual environment



Connectivity and impression management

METHODOLOGY

The video study

- Participants are briefed about the study and given a camcorder
- Participants are asked to record a week-long video diary of their lives
- The focus of the videos is on switches between roles and domains, in particular in relation to ICT use
- Participants are free to decide what to record and how long the videos last
- On completion, each participant is debriefed and collection is arranged
- On collection of the video data, the research team analyses them thematically with the use of NVivo

The interview study

- An individual interview is conducted with each participant on completion of the video study, usually within a month
- The aim of the interview is twofold:
 - To discuss a selection of video excerpts shown during the interview, and
 - To gather each participant's views on the topics under study
- A narrative approach is adopted whereby the interviewee is encouraged to share his/her views and stories
- The interview data are analysed thematically with the use of NVivo

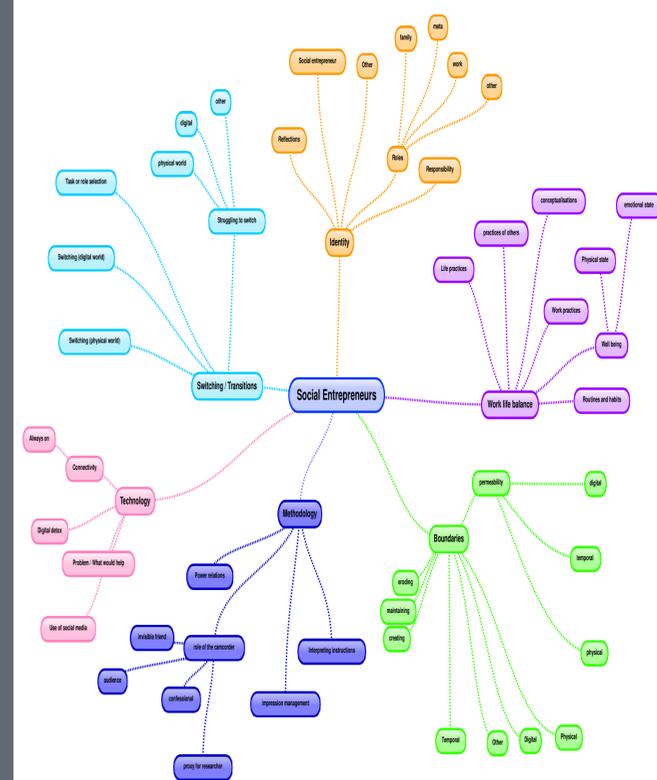
THE PROJECT

- This study is conducted as part of a wider, multidisciplinary study, known as the Digital Brain Switch (DBS)
- The DBS team comprises social scientists and computer scientists aiming to both understand the phenomena under study and to develop technologies that will help individuals manage their switches more efficiently
- The project runs through mid-2015, is funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and constitutes a collaborative effort between Lancaster University, The Open University, Royal Holloway University of London, and University of Kent.

THE PARTICIPANTS

- Three UK-based groups have been selected to take part:
 - Social Entrepreneurs (SEs)**
 - SEs are often on the go and are an example of a remote worker
 - SEs have no standard working hours or work location
 - SEs' work focuses primarily on social impact
 - Students**
 - Younger population aged between 18 and 25 years old
 - Under- or post-graduate in any field
 - Office-based employees**
 - Employees who work regular working hours
 - Office-bound (no home workers)
 - In any industry and level of seniority

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS



REFERENCES

- Ashforth, B., 2000. *Role Transitions in Organizational Life: An Identity-Based Perspective*, Lea's Organization Management Series. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers, Mahwah, NJ, USA.
- Burke, P.J., 2006. Identity Change. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 69, 81-96.
- Panteli, N., 2009. *Virtual Social Networks: A New Dimension for Virtuality Research*, in: *Virtual Social Networks: Mediated, Massive and Multiplayer Sites*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, USA.

Transitioning—the importance of the physical environment