Ageing and everyday interactions with technology:

The challenges of reskilling

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Reskilling

- Embedded orientations to technologies formed over lifecourse and across generation units

- Continuum

  Chronic reskilling_____Chronically deskilled

- Technological engagement central or alien to way of living (often way of working)

- Embedded in technologically reflexive 'communities' (work and personal) or not (c.f. Lash)

- Labour of reskilling ranges from minimal to intense

- Use value 'obvious' to, or 'abstractly detached', from lives on the ground

Self view

- Technologies (and especially assistive technologies) imbued with 'self' meaning and value
- Use value in supporting and enabling independence in established way of living

However,

- (In)competence says much about self – to self
- Assistive technologies as a 'need' can signal corporeal-self incompetence, tie into shame associated with ageing (c.f. Elias)
- Technological incompetence itself can be associated with shame, and discredited identity as 'old' (and classed)
- Technologies evoke emotional and 'affective' responses (shame and disgust associated with assistive devices more generally, also 'love' of gadgets)

Technology – and especially assistive technologies – not neutral 'use-value' issues

Relational view (1)

- Technologies, personal orientations to them and their value for living given meaning relationally

- Skills, orientations and 'naturalised' capacities for technological reskilling are not 'individual' matter

- Shame, associated with corporeal and technological incompetence often, for example, associated with 'stigma'

- Corporeal (in)competence linked to attribution of socially competent and valued identities

- *Assistive* technologies especially are loaded with social meaning

- Fundamentally a relational – i.e. Social - matter.

Relational view (2)

- Technologies are not simply there to be used by 'actors', but are 'actants'

- Not that they impinge on the self and personal relationships

- But in interaction with technologies, ways of living (and the selves and relationships they involve) are reconfigured

- Engagements with technologies can facilitate established ways of (independent) living, but can also be unsettling for sense of self, relationships and ways of living

Generational view

Co-existence of cohorts who are orientated to technologies in very different ways:

Those ('older' ones) who might be assumed to be relatively unreflexive and those ('younger' ones) who appear to be chronically reflexive in their engagements with technology

Generationally, orientations to chronic reflexivity built up over life course may possibly mean more comfortable interactions with assistive technologies in later life

Questions are:

(i) what 'generation units' (groups within generations) are currently engaging reflexively what ones are being left 'behind'

(ii) What significance (self, relational, emotional) do *assistive* technologies have for particular groups, and how is this linked to sense and attribution of socially valued identities and ways of living

Methodologically

Interdisciplinary 'ethnographic' work that re-balances the investigation of 'value' by attending to what technological reskilling involves for the perspective of embedded lives and ways of living

Exploring embedded orientations to interactions with technology across and within 'generations'

Confluence and dissonance between abstract use value and self, relational and life value

How actor/technological actant interactions reconfigure, enable and unsettle ways of living for different social constituencies

How technological reskilling involves broader self and relational reskilling.