



The 21st Annual ICA Mobile Pre-Conference 2025:

Continuities, Ruptures, and New Formations in Mobile Communication

Wednesday, June 11th

University of Denver

Anderson Academic Commons (AAC) Room 290
2150 E. Evans Ave., Denver, CO 80208¹

Addressing ICA's 75th anniversary, the 2025 pre-conference theme is an invitation to critically reflect on the disruptive versus consolidating role of mobile media and mobile communication in everyday life, as well on how mobile communication as a field has disrupted and consolidated communication in the past and will in the future.

Workshops and presentations will take stock of our past, critically review present developments, and chart out future avenues for mobile communication research. We particularly welcome contributions speaking to three important aspects of the theme: mobile communication scholarship as a transformative and stabilizing force in society, mobile media and mobile communication as both revolutionary and consolidating in how we organize and experience everyday life, and mobile communication studies as a disrupted and resilient field. In all these contexts, elements of disruption and consolidation are not necessarily antithetical but may productively be framed as a dialectical relationship. Mobile communication research is being disrupted on multiple fronts and, perhaps, with unprecedented consequences. AI-based technologies have started revolutionizing scholarly practice with vast implications for the way we conduct and evaluate scholarship.

¹ The AAC is about a 10-minute walk from the University of Denver Station (RTD commuter rail). Trains coming from the Theatre District/Convention Center Station take 20 to 25 minutes. There is a small parking lot adjacent to the AAC, making it easy for ride share drop-offs. That lot has a small amount of paid visitor parking and there are larger [visitor pay lots](#) within a 10-minute walk.

SCHEDULE

9:00-9:15: WELCOME

Adriana de Souza e Silva

ICA Mobile Communication Division Vice-Chair

Northeastern University

9:15-10:00: OPENING KEYNOTE

Some advice to my younger self

Rich Ling

In this talk, I will take a look back (and also forward) to think about the development and growth of mobile communication research. In the early 1990s, when the field first started to be recognized, it was not clear whether it would be a short-term affair or if it would grow into an ongoing area of study. Along the way, it has gone through various twists and turns as it went through its academic childhood and adolescence. The question now becomes how the area will develop in the future. I will use the talk to think about the different waypoints, and I will also try to offer some advice on how we, as a community, can orient ourselves as we look forward.

10:00-10:30: COFFEE BREAK

10:30-11:30: WORKSHOP

Regulating mobile media: Disconnection policies and the dilemma of self-determination

Julius Klingelhofer¹, Alicia Gilbert², Morgan Quinn Ross³, Cynthia Dekker⁴, Mora Matassi⁵, Lise-Marie Nassen⁶, Douglas Parry⁷, Vicente David de Segovia⁸, Sara van Bruyssel⁸, Alice Verlinden⁶

¹ FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg

² University of Mainz

³ Oregon State University

⁴ University of Amsterdam

⁵ Universidad de San Andrés

⁶ KU Leuven

⁷ Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

⁸ Ghent University

The news is filled with stories about smartphone bans in classrooms that more and more countries seek to impose on schools. However, these imposed disconnection policies confront us with a dilemma of self-determination: whereas experts call for collective action that alleviates the individual from the struggle with permanent connectivity, research shows that disconnection is typically more beneficial when intrinsically motivated rather than imposed on individuals. This creates a significant challenge for policymakers: how to design disconnection policies that achieve their intended benefits without being compromised by their mandatory nature. The goal of this interactive workshop is to equip attendees with tools and perspectives needed to design and evaluate (mobile) disconnection guidelines and policies that thoughtfully balance individual self-determination with collective well-being on the example of disconnection policies in schools.

11:30-11:45: SHORT BREAK

11:45-12:45: PANEL

From #Wanderlust to #Overtourism: A Reckoning

Erika Polson

University of Denver, USA

From locating #hiddengems on social media to using smartphone apps to book local apartments, mobile media once commended for facilitating travel connections are now perceived as impacting livability in areas that become ‘hotspots.’ This paper analyzes news media, organizational reports, and social media hashtags on the problem of #overtourism and the ways mobile media practices (such as sharing location-tagged content) lead to spatial consequences and impact materials environments. The reckoning here is an account—using the words of journalists, residents, protestors, and social media users – of how the ‘problem’ of mobile media in relation to tourism is understood in popular discourse. While earlier mobile media theories (such as Gordon

& de Souza e Silva's 'net locality') usefully highlighted new connectivities in order to challenge concerns that mobile media had *disconnected* people from places, we should now ask how the ability of so many people to build connections to locations creates new ruptures.

Disruption on the Construction Site: Interruptions by Mobile Communication Technologies in a Blue-Collar Workplace

Floor Fiers, Olga Eisele

University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

Mobile communication technologies have transformed work on construction sites characterized by a dispersed workforce and the presence of noisy machines. By interrupting employees through a phone call, organizations can inform and coordinate with employees quickly, which has the potential to increase productivity and stimulate community building. However, the same interruptions may be disruptive and have negative consequences, for example, for attention and safety. This study zooms in on a case study of workers in a construction and demolition company in the Netherlands. Conducting a phone survey, we aim to understand how ICT-enabled interruptions may explain variation in productivity, job satisfaction, and safety climate. In addition, we examine the moderating role of workers' perceptions around ICT use in the organization. As such, this study may contribute to more informed work policies and support for workers in navigating ICT demands with potential to increase productivity and employee well-being.

On talking to 'family': Situating the mobile phone in the role of 'caregiving' by rural women in India

Debjani Chakraborty

Central University of Punjab, India

Mobile Media Studies have centered the user in approaches to studying how mobile media is incorporated in their lives. Gender is one of the many attributes studied, and this work is an expansion on how contextual gender roles interact with the affordances offered by mobile media devices in an increasingly connected world. In the setting studied in this work (rural India), gender expectations go beyond the confines of performativity around how one interacts with a digital device, but also includes roles and jobs assigned to women in their capacity as members of the family and of the society. A comprehension of each such gender expectation is essential to understanding how they interact with the actual usage of the mobile media technology by women. This work

explores the question around what role do mobile phones play in helping rural women perform the role of caregivers in their families.

Mediated Migration: Ruptures, Continuities, and New Formations of Hybrid Space

Ana Avila¹, Scott W. Campbell²

¹ University of Michigan, USA

² Ohio State University, USA

This research examines the role of mobile media in the migration experiences of 21 individuals from Central and South America at the U.S. Southern border. Through on-site fieldwork and interviews, we build upon the conceptual advancements of Hybrid Spaces, which investigate how they are constructed across diverse geographies in interaction with power dynamics (de Souza e Silva, 2023; de Souza e Silva et al., 2025). Migrants use creative ways to keep their phones and have access to wi-fi practicing agency and keeping a constant awareness of threats such as organized crime and government surveillance. Migrants use the phone to ease and sooth themselves when connecting to close ones and building alliances with other fellow migrants. Studying Hybrid Spaces allows us to attend that mobile phones are not just an artifact as it is considered in borders policy, it is a human rights matter.

The mobile phone in edge-of-grid communities in rural South India: Generational perspectives on a family communication device.

Sujatha Sosale

The University of Iowa, USA

Mobile phones have become increasingly integral to the lives of people in extreme rural regions. Part of a larger study, this presentation focuses on the relationships that communities in the Uttara Kannada district, in the state of Karnataka in South India have developed with mobile phones. Based on more than 80 in-depth, intergenerational interviews with members of extreme rural communities in South India, I show how these populations at the edge of the grid, and indeed the economy, have gradually integrated this technology into their daily life stream. The social hierarchies within the family also render mobile phones irrelevant for some of the family members. A greater understanding of these nuances will help explain the adaptation of a technology that turned out to be simultaneously a family device as well as a personal device.

12:45-1:45: LUNCH

1:45-2:45: WORKSHOP

Opportunities and Challenges of Mobile Media

Through the Lens of Neurodiversity: Time for a New Research Agenda?

Ian Axel Anderson¹, Joseph Bayer², Arturo Cocchi³, Alina Danilkow⁴, Alicia Gilbert⁵, Kathrin Karsay⁴, Michaela Šaradín Lebedíková⁶, Mariek Vanden Abeele³, Anna Wagner⁷, Lara Wolfers⁸

¹ California Institute of Technology

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⁸ University of Basel

This workshop will explore neurodiversity and the controversies surrounding this emerging concept in relation to mobile media. The session aims to assist participants in identifying new research agendas and spur future collaborations related to neurodiversity. The session will commence with three flash presentations designed to inspire potential research ideas. Topics will include: (a) *Habit, Self-regulation & Coping*; (b) *Disconnection & Digital Well-being*; and (c) *Representation, Self-diagnosis & Stigmatization*. Following these presentations, participants will break into groups focused on one of five topics: opportunities for empowerment, barriers and questions on inclusivity, neurodiversity and digital well-being, rethinking communication theories for neurodivergent media, and methodological challenges. Each breakout group will conclude the session with a brief presentation summarizing their discussion and sharing their ideas, hopefully inspiring other participants to generate new ones.

2:45-3:15: COFFEE BREAK

3:15-4:15: PANEL

Ubiquitous AI in Student Everyday Life: Situational Contexts of ChatGPT Use

*Daniel Pietschmann, Natalie Rödel, Veronika Karnowski*¹

¹ Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany

This mobile experience sampling study examines how university students integrate ChatGPT into their academic and personal routines, focusing on situational use contexts. Recognizing ChatGPT's potential as a disruptive educational technology, we ask: How do students use it across devices, locations, and social contexts, and what gratifications do they seek? Using multilevel latent class analysis, we identified three key clusters: focused academic work at home, ad hoc mobile use, and collaborative use in formal settings. The results reveal two distinct user types, task-oriented and multifaceted, who differ in how deeply ChatGPT shapes their daily practices across situations and contexts. This study highlights how situational context mediates the disruptive potential of AI tools across students' everyday lives.

Boosting political advertising literacy: The role of training in Mobile Experience Sampling

*Carmen Dymanus, Susan Vermeer, Annelien van Remoortere, Rens Vliegenthart, Sanne Kruikemeier*¹

¹ Wageningen University & Research, Netherlands

The rise of data-driven campaigning has transformed political communication, yet citizens often struggle to recognize targeted political ads. This study employs a mobile experience sampling (MESM) approach to examine political ad recognition. MESM is a novel user-centric methodological approach for empirical work in mobile communication which allows for real-time data collection, reducing biases common in retrospective self-report measures. In the three weeks before the 2023 Dutch elections, 185 respondents uploaded 2,355 screenshots via mobile devices. To assess the impact of training on MESM data quality, a third of participants received an "ad training" intervention before participation. Results indicate that training did not significantly increase the quality of uploads. Only about half of all uploads were actual online political ads with disclosures - many instead depicted political news, flyers, or newspapers. This

suggests that people struggle to distinguish between different types of political content, posing a challenge to user-centric data collection approaches.

Not hungry anymore but still missing something? The Smartphone as a snack machine for need satisfaction

Lara Wolfers¹, Thilo von Pape²

¹ University of Basel, Switzerland

² Université de Fribourg, Switzerland

In this theoretical contribution, we propose the metaphor of “snacking” to rethink how smartphones satisfy human needs in everyday life. Conceptualizing smartphones as snack machines helps explain the shift from context-dependent practices of fulfillment (analogous to meals) to seamless, often fragmented need satisfaction via mobile media. We argue that this shift affects not so much the average valence of emotional or social outcomes, but rather the amplitude between moments of need satisfaction and frustration or between moments of loneliness and connection—potentially impacting psychological resilience and social tolerance towards others. At the same time, not all short interactions are mere snacks: some, like a coffee break, may function as psychologically and socially meaningful micro-rituals—offering a promising lens for exploring how short mobile interactions can also contribute to sustained meaning across everyday life.

Attention Scrollers: Evidence On the Relationship Between Mobile Video Use and Sustained Attention

Kerria Drüppel, Jana Dombrowski, Sabine Trepte

University of Hohenheim, Germany

A growing number of anecdotal evidence claims detrimental effects of mobile short-form video use on people’s ability to sustain attention. However, this relationship has barely been the subject of empirical studies. In this study, we aim to replicate the first findings supporting a negative impact of short-form video use and sustained attention by Lin et al. (2024). In addition, we extend their work by differentiating subjective and objective measures of both sustained attention and short-form video use. The results of a real-time attention test and follow-up online survey ($N = 385$) show that subjective short-form video use relates to perceived deficits in attention. Participants using short-form videos subjectively longer perform worse on the objective attention test. However, when considering objective measures of short-form video use, no association with sustained attention emerges. Our results suggest that participants might be overly

aware of their mobile media use habits, blaming attentional malfunctions for disruptive experiences.

Embodied Disruption: Discourses of Responsibility in Emergency Notification Apps

Rivka Ribak, Oren Livio, Oded Kimron

University of Haifa, Israel

Mobile media apps are designed for disruption. In this presentation, we explore what is arguably the paradigmatic disruptive application – the emergency notification app, developed in order to alert individuals to immediate danger while preserving the resilience of the home front as a whole. Drawing on walkthroughs of emergency apps and an analysis of related materials, we suggest how this app both manifests in and enables three interrelated processes: the dissolution of the national collective into individually-alerted users; the blurring of the distinction between emergency and routine; and the delegation of preparedness responsibility from the state to individual users. We argue that these three processes – facilitated by the seemingly life-saving, deeply personalized disruption of the emergency app – carry critical political consequences. By creating an illusion of personal safety, these processes, which materialize in the hand-held app, allow for a prolonged state of exception and the indefinite protraction of war and danger.

4:15-4:30: SHORT BREAK

4:30-5:15: CLOSING KEYNOTE

Next Steps for Mobile Communication: AI in a Mobile World

Lynn Schofield Clark

University of Denver, USA

This presentation will explore questions at the intersection of mobile communication studies and critical approaches to artificial intelligence. After considering the relationships between mobile communication and AI from an historical materialist perspective and discussing recent research exploring this intersection, we will break into

small groups to work together to answer the question: How can we turn our insights from mobile communication to the contexts that are emerging in relation to AI?

5:30-7:30: RECEPTION and SOCIAL EVENT

Banfi Wine Cellar

Fritz Knoebel School of Hospitality Management

2044 E. Evans Ave., Denver CO 80208

* 3 minute walk from the pre-conference location.

Organizing Committee

- Adriana de Souza e Silva (chair) (Northeastern University)
- Scott W. Campbell (The Ohio State University)
- Ragan Glover (University of Michigan)
- Morgan Quinn Ross (Oregon State University)
- Cecilia Uy-Tioco (California State University, San Marco)
- Mariek Van den Abeele (Ghent University)

Local liaisons: Lynn Schofield Clark & Erika Polson (University of Denver)

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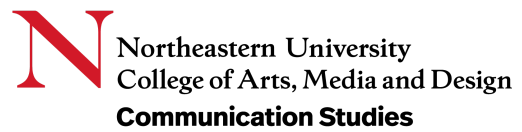
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