

## Adaptive ethnography: methodologies for the study of mobile learning in youth culture

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Mobile media and mobile phones in particular have traditionally been characterized as disruptive technologies rather than something which holds a potential for learning. Recently there has been increasing interest in the possibilities of mobile learning as researchers are realizing the vast importance of these devices in society, especially within youth culture (Attewell & Savill-Smith 2003). However, before we even begin to develop learning materials on a mobile platform, it is necessary to study the actual use of mobile phones in a learning perspective. This is where processual methodologies are necessary in order to answer questions such as what do young people do with mobile phones? what affordances does this medium have in a Gibsonian perspective (Gibson 1979)? and is it possible to speak of learning processes when studying mobile phone use in formal as well as informal learning contexts? These are some of the questions discussed in the paper.

The point of departure for this paper is a PhD project on mobile learning. A user-oriented research design for this project is outlined in the paper, describing a triangulating and adaptive approach blending methods such as observation, various interviewing techniques, and computer logging of calls and messages in an effort to explore the learning processes of young mobile phone users. Going outside the scope of the PhD project at hand, the paper calls for an *adaptive* methodological approach (Hine 2000) and describes various research designs for studies of mobile phone use with the aim of suggesting new and adaptive ways of using processual methodologies to investigate the concept of mobile learning.

Bio:

Mette Berth is a Danish PhD scholar whose current research project is called “Mobile learning: a study of the learning processes of young people in formal and informal learning contexts”. The

project is commissioned by DREAM (Danish Research Centre on Education and Advanced Media Materials) and aims to deliver theoretical and empirical basis for developing educational materials on a mobile platform. Currently Mette Berth is working at Department of Communication, Journalism and Computer Science at Roskilde University.

Previous research has focused on convergence of media and young people's media use, including a thesis on the Danish youth website SKUM, which proved that it would be fruitful to add a sociocultural layer to the discussions on convergence, introducing the concept of *cultural convergence* in youth culture.