

David Thorns and Mary Allan: Access Grid, video conferencing, and real life simulation

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Abstract

A 2006 pilot study investigating patterns of interaction in Access Grid environment revealed situations in which real- life strategies and practices were mirrored in the AG environment. Following this observation, further study is underway to investigate AG environments as simulators of Face-to-face interactions. This paper describes the findings of the ongoing study. It investigates patterns of interactions among people, and the ways in which they interact with the technological environment, and use various artifacts for conveying and sharing information when collaborating over AG and other video conferencing systems. Building on the hypothesis that AG and other advanced video conferencing tools create a simulated face- to-face environment, the study investigates the emergence of spontaneous, informal collaboration alongside planned collaborative activities. The paper raises the question whether the forms of communication allow the creation of new forms of knowledge and require the development of new research practices.

About the speakers



David Thorns is Director of the Social Science Research Centre and Professor of Sociology at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. He has over 30 years experience as an urban researcher working in the fields of housing, social policy, social inequality, tourism, research methodology and the implications of globalisation. He has published extensively including 10 books. He is a Principal researcher and Member of the Management Group of the Building Research Capability in the Social Sciences project and Principal Researcher on a three year Marsden funded project Winners and Losers in the Knowledge Society. He is also a member of steering committee of the Asia Pacific Housing Research Network. Social Science

Commission of NZ UNESCO and Social Sciences Advisory Committee of the Royal Society NZ and Board member of the Centre for Housing Research Aotearoa/New Zealand. International Social Science Council and Capability Building Fund for the NZ Advanced Network .

Mary Allan completed her PhD in 2005 at the University of Canterbury NZ. Her thesis investigated internet mediated collaborative learning at tertiary level, and proposed a new methodology that enables micro and macro investigation of computer mediated collaborative actions. A software pack is currently under development, converting the methodology into a usable tool. Mary's research focuses on electronically mediated interactions for the construction of collaborative knowledge across diverse contexts such as tertiary teaching and



learning, workplace training, and research institutions working across sites nationally and internationally. Mary is currently collaborating with Prof Thorns on a BRCSS funded Access Grid project, which is investigating ways of facilitating collaboration, and knowledge creation across research teams using Access Grid technologies.

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