

From

URBAN TAPESTRIES

to

SOCIAL TAPESTRIES

Giles Lane
PLAN Event, ICA
1st February 2005



URBAN TAPESTRIES

What is Urban Tapestries?

- A framework for exploring and sharing experience and knowledge, for leaving and annotating ephemeral traces of peoples' presence in the geography of the city.
- A research project that has explored the social and cultural uses of the convergence of place and mobile technologies.

The research has been via:

- building an experimental platform for the authoring and access of place-based content (text, audio, pictures)
- *transdisciplinary* research, i.e. many different skills working together rather than in disciplinary isolation.

Research on Place & Mobility

- *place* not just *location* – understanding the complex relationships that define urban life, individuals and communities.
- *public authoring* not just *consumption* – taking ‘ownership’ of public spaces through co-creative marking and mapping territory electronically.
- *social knowledge* not just *entertainment* – using ICTs to enrich social and cultural life by sharing everyday, informal knowledges.

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Articulating Knowledge & Experience

Making legible and tangible relationships, associations and connections between people, places, things that are often invisible, unspoken.

Adding persistence to the knowledges and experiences of individuals (and groups) that enable further opportunities for social encounters and connections beyond the *present* of day-to-day life.

Presence

Exploring broader definitions and understandings of *presence* beyond simple proximity.

Maintaining remote connections to physically distant places and communities through a kind of *asynchronous inhabitation* of place.

Creating a platform for people to make their voice present in a community who are shy of social encounters – *discrete presence*.

Paper Prototyping

Bodystorming Experiences

Proboscis uses a technique for rapid iteration and testing of ideas, interactions and uses through lo-tech paper prototyping.

Bodystorming Experiences enable us to give people a physical, tactile and tangible experience of what using a spatial annotation system might be like, and why and what they might use it for.

We have run many events with people from technology, policy, arts and social sciences, as well as local people such as senior citizens and teenagers. These events have given us unique insights into the *relationships* people form with each other through *place*, and have had a major influence on the technical development of the Urban Tapestries system.

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Paper Prototyping: Bodystorming



Trials & Tests

December 2003

100 person public trial of first prototype using PocketPC PDAs and an 802.11b WiFi mesh network in Bloomsbury.

June 2004

10 person field trial using Symbian smartphones over GPRS network across 3km² area of Central London.

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Current Iteration



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Initial Iteration



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Map of Threads



All Threads



December 2003 Trial



June/July 2004 Trial

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UT Web Browser

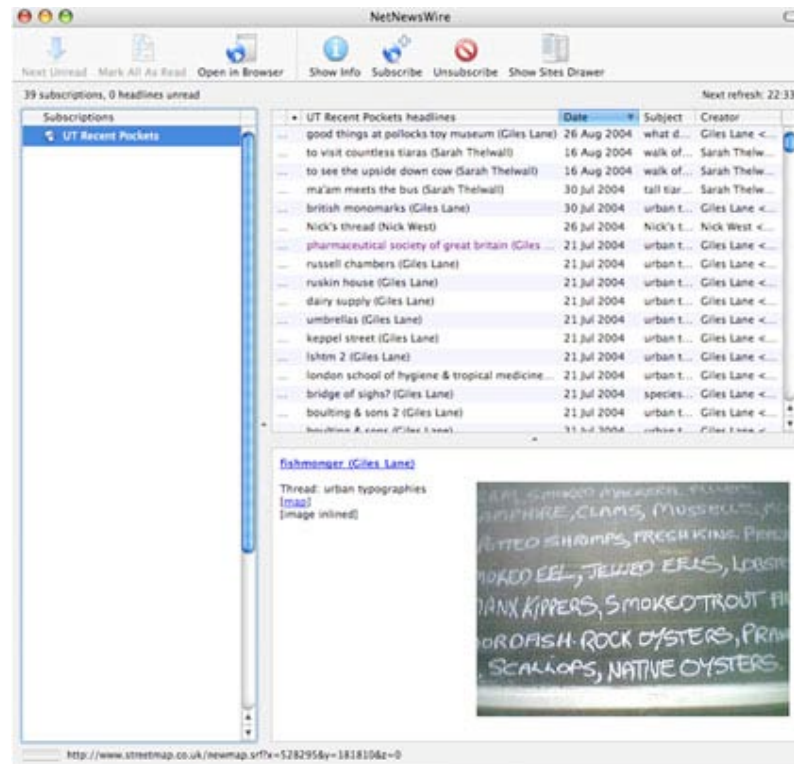
The screenshot displays the Urban Tapestries web browser interface. At the top, the title "URBAN TAPESTRIES" is shown in a pixelated font. The main content is organized into several panels:

- Author List:** A list of authors with their respective pocket counts. Authors include dan dxon (12 pockets), dan hill (20 pockets), Danny Angus (7 pockets), Garrick Jones (1 pocket), Giles Lane (113 pockets), Giles Rolleston (23 pockets), and Jacqueline Carter.
- Pockets by Giles Rolleston:** A list of specific pockets created by Giles Rolleston, including "group photo", "if music", and "centre point".
- Active Pocket:** Details for a pocket titled "if music", posted on Sat, 26 Jun 2004 16:33:51. It includes the author (Giles Rolleston), thread ("walking the city"), and an image URL. A "Play Pocket Sound" button is visible.
- Map Viewer:** A map showing the location of the pocket. It includes a "Scroll" button and a "Zoom Level" slider.

At the bottom of the interface, there is a footer with copyright information: "© 2002-2004 Proboscis. All rights reserved. Map Data: © Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved. Licence number 100/300/442."

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UT Location-based RSS Feeds



Next Iterations

- Major System upgrade (to 'version 2')
- Public Web Authoring Interface covering 10km² of Central London
- New Symbian Client for 3G device using multi-modal positioning capabilities

....plus some exciting things to follow...

URBAN TAPESTRIES

Team

Giles Lane, Alice Angus, Danny Angus,
John Paul Bichard, Michael Golembewski,
Katrina Jungnickel, Paul Makepeace, Rachel Murphy,
George Papamarkos, Victoria Peckett, Zoe Sujon,
Sarah Thelwall and Nick West with Huw Jeffries,
Nigel Palmer and James Wilkes.

URBAN TAPESTRIES

Partners & Collaborators

- Proboscis (project initiator & manager)
- London School of Economics (social research)
- France Telecom R&D UK (symbian programming)
- Ordnance Survey (cartography & GIS)
- Orange UK (mobile network access)
- Hewlett-Packard Research Labs (device support)

Funders

- Department of Trade & Industry
- Arts Council England
- Daniel Langlois Foundation, Montreal

SOCIAL TAPESTRIES

Where Next: Social Tapestries

A research initiative to develop experimental uses of public authoring which demonstrate the social and cultural benefits of local knowledge sharing enabled by new mobile technologies, in collaboration with other civil society organisations.

- to create and support relationships that transcend existing social and cultural boundaries;
- enable the development of new social and creative practices based around place, identity and community;
- understand the benefits and the limits of knowledge mapping and sharing.

In 4 areas: education, community & arts, housing & local government.

Social Tapestries: Experiments

Education & Learning 1: Kingswood Social Tapestry

Proboscis collaborated with Kingswood High School near Hull to design a set of tools and activities that introduced the concept of local knowledge gathering, mapping and sharing with Year 7 students (11-12 year olds).

The aim of the project is to impact the relevance of learning by making it proximate to the environment in which the students live. Students will be asked throughout the year to gather and map specific phenomena which can then be studied across the curriculum.

Proboscis aims to develop a model and toolkit for other schools to apply this approach to associative learning, as well as to make the process sustainable and transferable.

Social Tapestries: Experiments

Education & Learning 2: STAMPS System for TAGging Messages, Post-inferential Semantics

Proboscis is collaborating with researchers from the CRAFT (Computer Supported Collaborative Learning) Lab at EPFL Lausanne (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) on a 3 year PhD research project exploring the cognitive processes used by people to infer elements of spatialised communications.

EPFL will use Urban Tapestries as their test platform running 2-3 trials over 2 years in order to develop intelligent algorithms based on semantic descriptions of spatialised communication to enable smart meta data to be automatically added to spatial annotations.

The first trial with an estimated 10 participants is anticipated to run in London for up to 2 months during Spring 2005.

Social Tapestries: Experiments

Community & Arts: Robotic Feral Public Authoring

Proboscis has won an EPSRC award to host the renown artist/engineer Natalie Jeremijenko of UC San Diego on a Visiting Fellowship during 2004/05.

We will be collaborating with Natalie to adapt her Feral Robots (toy robot dogs reconfigured to act as independent mobile pollution sensors) to create a model for using hobbyist robotics and public authoring as social activism, and as triggers for new social and cultural encounters.

We are just embarking on partnerships with SPACE Studios and the London Knowledge Lab to begin working with a local community in Hackney with whom we will identify a local environmental condition and develop a prototype feral robot to sense and map the pollution as part of a public event to raise awareness of and focus attention on the issue.

Social Tapestries: Experiments

Community & Arts: Neighbourhood Games

John Paul Bichard is leading a research project exploring the feasibility of gaming as a social tool. The project will look at ways in which social multiplayer games can be developed and sustained in a local neighbourhood environment. The aim is to develop a games methodology that has the potential to allow a broad demographic to play in the everyday environment across race, age and gender.

A fundamental part of human social activity is play, whether private or shared, solitary or in groups. Play functions on a number of levels, one of which could be as a means of exploring, testing and defining the 'neighbourhood' as both a social place and an interpersonal mechanism. Neighbourhood Games looks at a way of developing simple games layers within familiar environments – in relation to the research carried out to date in UT, it will draw on notions of community, age separation and hidden stories with an aim to establish clear directions for ongoing research and development.

Social Tapestries: Experiments

Active Citizenship: Eyes on the Street

Proboscis is developing a collaborative project with Citizens Online and the Community Development Foundation to explore the potential and appropriateness of social technologies to help address issues of liveability, and community engagement in community safety.

The intention is to work with people in a specific neighbourhood to investigate the potential for systems like Urban Tapestries to meet the needs of people in a community to have effective 'eyes on the street', creating possibilities for new approaches to neighbourliness, community reporting on local environmental conditions and other social interactions.

The design process will be adaptive and people-centred, with the intention of creating appropriate uses and interfaces for people with different lifestyles, capabilities and levels of interest.

