Gendering Old Age: The Role of Mobile Phones in the Experience of Aging for Women

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Abstract. Although the mobile phone is currently one of the most pervasive communication technologies, little discussion of it has been framed within a gender perspective and fewer of those discussions from an aging perspective. The study focuses on older women as a meaningful group; one that is constantly underrepresented in academic and commercial studies of the mobile phone. The focus of the research is on the use of the mobile phone by older Portuguese women using a Life Course approach. The key findings are that the mobile phone has different roles and affordances depending on women's life stages. If it is true that young women show a higher pre-disposition to a more diversified and intense use of the mobile phone, older women do not always correspond to the stereotype of lack of interest or skills, on the contrary the mobile phone seems to play a very important role in many of these older women's lives.

Keywords: Older women · Mobile phones · Gendering · Life course

1 Introduction

The paper aims to provide a better understanding of the relationship between women and technology through an inquiry into the significance of mobile phones in the lives of Portuguese women, focusing on older women. The results stem from a wider study of the mobile phone as a site where the nuances of women's experiences with technology becomes visible, through a life-course approach [1].

It is a feminist claim that our relation to technology is a gendered relation and that "technology itself cannot be fully understood without reference to gender" [2, p. 32]. If the mobile phone is an expression of our identity, then it also gendered. How does this gendering occur? The option for using the verb "gendering" is rooted in the understanding that gender is socially constructed. The aim is to study gender as a process [3].

If society is co-produced with technology, the gender effect cannot be ignored in the design, development, innovation and communication of technological products: "Technology, then, can tell us something we need to know about gender identity. Gender identity can tell us something we need to know about technology" [2, p. 42]. The emergent "technofeminism" theory proposes a relation in which technology is, at the same time, cause and consequence of gender relations [4, p. 107]. Technofeminism allows us to consider women's agency and offer a more complex account of the gendering process,

one that incorporates contradiction. The research took up Wajcman's challenge to provide a study of how different groups of Portuguese women responded and assimilated the mobile phone in their daily lives.

One of the first motivations for conducting this research is the empirical observation of how women feel so comfortable using the mobile phone. Younger or older they all carry one in their bags and treat it as a mundane object. This observation was followed by the statistical evidence that women, contrary to other technologies, were adopting mobile phones at the same rhythm as men [5]. The following step was to question this apparent equality in numbers [6]. In fact, much of the previous research on gender and mobile phone use was conducted in comparative terms, women versus men [7]. In this type of research, we end up finding no meaningful differences, such as …, between men and women. In addition, that lack of differences is left with no explanation. This work wanted to fill this gap and contribute to an explanation; thus, the research is not centered on differences between men and women, but rather on women's specific experiences, leaving space for the contradictory effects and meanings for different groups of women. Therefore, it is not about differences between men and women but about the different meaning of mobile phones and their trajectory in women's lives.

The research methodology aligns with the taking of a cultural perspective of mobile communications. Albeit blending quantitative and qualitative methods in an interpretative research strategy, the work clearly opts for a qualitative dominant mixed method designed to answer the question of what the meaning of the mobile phone for different groups of Portuguese women, at different life stages in their life trajectories, is. We argue that the role women play in their lives, either a spouse, a mother, a working woman, a caretaker, is determinant in their use of the mobile phone. Moreover, this role is determined by their position in the life course and not by their position in the cohort.

The key findings are that, contrary to a theory of a dominant use for a technology, an *Apparatgeist*, as proposed by Katz [8] the mobile phone has different roles and affordances depending on women's life stages. As embodied objects, mobile phones are part of very complex power relationships and if it is true that women have conquered mobility in many ways, they are still constrained in their achievements by an unbalanced gendering of time, space and expectations about their role in society.

For Katz and Aakhus [9] the logic that drives personal communication technologies, such as the mobile phone, is one of "perpetual contact". This has been a controversial theory with authors such as Mimi Ito strongly disagreeing with a theory of *Apparatgeist*. For Ito technologies are "both constructive and constructed by historical, social and cultural contexts" [10]. Our understanding is also that knowledge is always contingent, grounded on the theory "situated knowledges" [11], on the need to specify contexts. The research also rooted in the believe that the study of everyday use of technology, and new media, provides a significant contribution to the understanding of how these technologies unfold, of how they are domesticated [12].

Portugal has certain characteristics that make for an interesting case study for the study of the gendering of the mobile phone. Besides having a high mobile phone penetration rate it also has one of the highest employment rates for women. However, Portuguese society is also full of contradictions in what concerns gender equality: motherhood does not seem to hinder women's commitment to working outside the home but that

does not translate into a more equal gender division of labor. Portuguese women end up being burden by the pressures of a double shift. They are also the main caregivers for children and the elderly and thus time constrains are amongst their main hurdles.

To analyze women's practices towards the mobile phone the research resorted to qualitative data to provide a more nuanced interpretation and understanding of the use of mobile phones by Portuguese women. Going through the numbers [13], we found that ownership seems to be especially determined by income level, age and education with the lowest percentages being for women that are older, retired, with no formal education, a low-income level, and the highest percentages for women that are younger, student or active workers with secondary education and a high income. It was also clear that the use of the mobile phone is mostly private with family members concentrating most of contacts. Friends are important for young women or for those women that are students. However, in the interviews, it was possible to identify that mature independent women also had a similar behavior to that of young women and students. Mature independent women, either because they do not have a stable relationship, are divorced or widows, have the need to reach out outside the family, resort to friends as their support network, and thus have similar practices to those of younger people.

The mobile phone is always the most private and personal technology for them, the one thing they are more physical close to; the one thing they always carry along. Albeit this proximity, there is a low level of personal choice. Women's phone choices suffer from the "wife-phone" and "job-phone" effect meaning that they either get them from their husbands, sometimes much like a used car, or they have a mobile that belongs to the company they work for. These effects sometimes lead to low levels of personalization. However, lack of personalization does not mean that they do not value the mobile phone. Women value the mobile phone not for the device itself but for the role it plays in their life, and they show a high degree of dependency across all life-stages although underlying reasons vary: for mature independent it is accessibility, and for empty nests a blend of autonomy and safety.

The research showed that mobile phones have different roles depending on women's turning point location, so it is all about the role women play and not about socioeconomics. Thus, contrary to the image projected in statistics, interviews provide a life trajectory for the mobile that does not present a linear trajectory across the life course of women's lives as shown by mature independent women and empty nesters.

The paper focuses on older women as a meaningful group; one that has been constantly underrepresented in academic and commercial studies of the mobile phone [14–16]. The field of mobile phone studies, as much of new media research, is centered on young people's practices and neglects adult women as an interesting and powerful group. The paper seeks to contribute to gain knowledge about the relationship between women and mobile phones and to critically investigate if and why mobile phones increase technological intimacy for women, and what is the trajectory of the mobile phone in women's lives? How do mobile phones enter women's lives, how do mobile phones evolve by means of use? The paper will give voice to older women to trace this trajectory and to investigate when do women come closer and distant to the mobile phone. How does the mobile phone affects women's experience of mobility? Two of the most important human perceptions are space and time. We define ourselves as human

beings in a certain time and space context. These dimensions are being transformed as our experience is mediated by mobile technologies. But how is this transformation occurring in older women's lives? Are women conquering new spaces that were traditionally hostile to them? Do mobile phones affect the power regulation and negotiation of a woman's place? Are women allowed a larger scope in the management of their time?

2   Research Design

The qualitative data was drawn from 37 in-depth, semi-structured interviews, interviews to Portuguese women, from which one older mature independent, and seven empty-nesters, which are the two life-stages focused in this paper:

Mature Independent
- Ana, 56-year-old, assistant, single.

Empty Nesters:
- Deolinda, 51-year-old, hairdresser business owner, widow, now living in a new relationship;
- Fátima 2, 56-year-old, retired insurance professional, married, and grandmother of one;
- Fernanda F., 52-year-old, computer manager, married;
- Fernanda R., 65-year-old, retired topographer, married, grandmother of two. She was taking care of one of her grandchildren;
- Manuela, 56-year-old, pre-retired saleswoman, divorced in a new relationship;
- Maria, 60-year-old, retired teacher, married, grandmother of three;
- Paula, 59-year-old, retired administrative, married, grandmother of two. She takes care of one of her grandsons.

These women were aggregated into seven groups corresponding to a life course approach.

As a concept, the life course refers to the age-graded, socially embedded sequence of roles that connect the phases of life. As a paradigm, the life course refers to an imaginative framework comprised of a set of interrelated presuppositions, concepts, and methods that are used to study these age-graded, socially embedded roles [17, 18].

Some previous research on gender and technology seemed to argue that gender differences were less marked in the younger population [19] but other authors argue that gender differences in behavior are shaped as much by socialization as by generation [20]. In the scope of this latter view, gender roles would depend on the stage of life women and men are, and thus gender differences will not disappear in the future: "the behavior of adults who currently find themselves at these life stages would in this case be a better predictor of what future adult online behavior will look like than young people's current behavior" [21, p. 353]. Also, generations should not be regarded as homogenous groups, but rather as complex constructs [22].

To define the seven groups or seven life-stages we used a modified version of the market research study[1] of Portuguese consumers [23]. The study used five variables (marital status, age, occupation, number of people in the household and children and teenagers in the household) to reach the life cycle of the Portuguese consumer constituted by eleven distinctive groups: single dependent; young independent; nesting; married with children aged 0–6 years old; married with children aged 7–12 years old; married with children aged 13–17 years old; married with teenagers aged 18–24 years-old; other married coupled; sole caregivers; empty nests; independent over 35 years-old.

In our research, we have aggregated women into seven life stages: single dependent; young independent; nesting; mothers; single mothers; mature independent and empty nests. Women in the single dependent life stage are above 18 years old but still depend on their families financially and still live with them. In the next life stage young women have gained their financial independence, although they may still live with family they are able to control purchase decisions. The nesting life stage is determined by the beginning of a co-habitation relationship that might or not be formally constituted as marriage. The next life stage is that of motherhood; contrary to the Marktest study we have aggregated women with children at different ages but we acknowledge some differences in the use of the mobile phone according to the age of the kids and if they are old enough to have a mobile phone of their own. We then have single mothers either because they have become widows, because they have divorced or separated their partners. We were particularly interested in analyzing the effects of the absence of the masculine part of the couple in the relationship of women to technology. Women in the mature independent life-stage are those that are around the age of 35, have no children and either have never been involved in a co-habitation relationship or have divorced or separated their partners. Finally, empty nesters are women whose children have left home and who have retired or whose job has reached a stagnant level. This last stage has also become more complex to define, and thus presents much variability.

As for the selection of women for the seven groups we constructed a convenience sample. This is a non-probability sample that uses criteria that are useful to the research. This type of sample was chosen because it was the one that best fitted the "ideal types" strategy of analysis. However, although individuals are representative of a certain type and the interviews provide heterogeneity this is not a probabilistic sample and thus has to ambition to be statistically representative. Women interviewed were also identified by "snow-ball" from a pool of urban heterosexual women.

As an analytical strategy we used "ideal types". Max Weber used the notion of "ideal types" in association with the construction of pure cases to illustrate a conceptual category. In the scope of Max Weber's work, ideal types are fictions, but in this research, following a similar strategy by Turkle to study computer cultures [24], we have isolated real cases that serve the same function – to highlight particular aspects of the gendering of the mobile phone.

The ideal type analysis was conducted under the method used by Soulet [25] following the methodological proposal for an interactive approach to qualitative research design by Maxwell [26]. The method is structured into two levels of analysis.

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[1] A sample of 10.093 interviews of the Portuguese population.

In the first level of local interpretation we look at each interview and how each life story helps us answer our research questions. At this first level the researcher starts by writing a synopsis, which is a synthesis of the discourse. This is the first level of abstraction and conceptualization. The following step is to write the inner history of the interview providing a chronological reading from the point of view of the interviewee in relation to the problem being analyzed. To complete the first level, the researcher draws a message that we can define as what each person wanted to tell us. These three steps are conducted for every single interview and then the researcher proceeds to the second level of global interpretation - a transversal interpretation of the individual stories, then of the aggregated ideal types, which in the scope of this research are the seven life-stages and finally the all stories as a whole.

To conduct this analysis, we did not wait for the categories to emerge from the analysis, rather our analysis was already informed by some major categories: identity, dependency, affectivity, norms and social fears, safety and control. Our goal in analyzing this category was: to provide an account of older women's daily lives (technology uses, media diets, routines), and determine its impact in their technological intimacy; to analyze the mobile phone use, the affordances it allowed to older women, such as identity construction, affectivity, safety and control; and how these affordances were translated into uses as those of personalization, micro-coordination, creativity, and entertainment.

3   Results

The stories of older women that we present here illustrate the multiplicity of facets of their emerging relationship with mobile phones, and how their life stories intersect with different specific uses of technology, and the mobile phone. This paper gives voice to their subjective experience of the mobile phone as a gendered technology, as a tool for "gender work" and "gendered work" [27]. For each life stage, we have chosen the stories of several individual women so that we can provide a deeper understanding of these women's lives as a whole.

Ana is an example of the challenges mature independent women face when they find themselves back or still in the game for a romantic relationship. Living alone these women use the mobile phone as a social networking tool and in that sense approach it in much the same manner than young dependent or teenagers. It is also a safety tool providing them freedom of movements even when alone. Finally, Fátima and Maria show how empty nests are not so empty after all. Even after retirement as is the case of Maria, many women find themselves having to take care of their grandchildren or return to work to provide extra money for their families. Fátima and Maria also represent opposite poles in terms of media ecology, which has provided very useful insights to how different media ecologies are determinant in the uses of the mobile phone.

3.1   Mature Independent: Ana D., Still in the Game

What we call mature independent women are those women that live solo, never married or are now single, through divorce, separation or because they have become widows and

have no children. Ana is a 56-year-old woman that has was never married nor had a long stable cohabiting relationship. We could not find national statistics to support the evidence but international data points in the direction of a greater interest of single women for technology. According to the "Targeting the Single Female Consumer" report[2] single women were much more likely to say they would like to buy a home computer than married women and they were also more prone to innovation. The mobile phone caters to their solo lifestyles by providing a social networking tool and safety to sustain their independence and freedom of movements.

Ana D. a 56-year-old woman that lives alone with her cat. Ana is a very hard-working woman that keeps two jobs to uphold her independent lifestyle: "I would like to have a person to share my life with, but I don't sacrifice myself for that". She has a high media use that ranges from the TV to the daily use of the computer, reading books and going to the cinema. Because of her workload, she finds herself pressed for time: "I wanted to be able to give up my second job as a translator to be able to go to the beach more, spend more time with friends, go to concerts and museums". She also plays games on the computer and she does not like to share neither the computer nor the mobile phone, "I have too many private messages there".

Safety was the trigger for getting a mobile phone: "Once I got stuck on the high-way and I could not reach a person. I felt I had to get something to talk with my dad. Before that I felt that no one needed to know my whereabouts, but we can also lie with the mobile phone". Today she has two, a job-phone and a personal one. The personal one she chose because it took good pictures and because it was a clamshell model, "I am very distracted, and I kept making calls by mistake". She uses the camera to take pictures of the cat, but the main purpose of the mobile is to keep her company and an emotional reassurance tool: "I keep all my messages and notes in there". If she could choose she would have an iPhone because she confesses to enjoy technology and would value having Internet and e-mail access.

For Ana it would be hard to go without her mobile, "without noticing we pour our memory into it" and she feels calmer with she has it. Emotional reassurance and freedom of movements are for her the main benefits. These are also important benefits for empty nesters.

3.2   Empty Nesters: Fátima and Maria, Nests Not So Empty After All

Empty nesters are finding out that their nests are not so empty after all and that they are so time constrained as they were before, when they had a job. For them the mobile phone means safety and a connection with the outside world. They show high usage and leisure uses when combined with low Internet usage or lack of Internet skills.

As we could see form the quantitative analysis, ownership and use drops for older womenwomen, but we must understand that this is a nuanced reality. We are going to tell the story of two friends, Fátima and Maria, to illustrate the importance of interpreting the use of the mobile phone in articulation with the user's media ecology. Fátima, with low Internet skills, is strongly dependent on her mobile phone: "I feel

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[2] Source: Business Insights.

naked without it (…) it is always in my pocket and goes with me everywhere (…). It is how I keep in touch and it is safety, now even more", but Maria says she rather use the computer. Companies often underestimate the interest of older women on mobile technology [28]. however, our interviews have shown that they are keen to understand, enthusiastic to learn, and use some advanced features of mobile phones such as MMS (multimedia messaging services).

Maria is a 60-year-old retired school teacher that was obliged to take full time care of two of her three grandchildren, a nine-year-old-boy and a three-year-old girl. She also looks after another granddaughter. Because of that, she says that she "wakes up running and sleeps running against time. Now that I am retired it is even worse that when I was working, and my husband only helps with the car pools because I don't drive which is actually my main regret". The daily routine of taking care of three children leaves little space for leisure activities like the radio or the TV. However, she does use the Internet daily for everything from paying the bills to searching health topics related to the kids.

Time constrains also inhibit a closer relationship with friends which she describes as having the same issues. To keep in touch, she rather uses the landline phone because from her point of view it is cheaper than the mobile. She has one over eight years, but she says she did not want one and still does not use it much. But with the increasingly complex school schedules she now started to value the mobile phone: "I went to pick up the kids from school, but it started to rain, and I had no way to call my husband. I am starting to recognize that it comes in hand."

Although she considers herself very proficient in the use of the computer, on the mobile phone she only uses voice and read text messages and neglects all other features including personalization. Her friend Fátima is on the opposite pole.

Fátima is a 56-year-old retired insurance professional that also takes care of one grandson, she does embroidery as a hobby, and made a small business out of it. During the week, her life revolves around the television, which is always on, "I have five TV sets, one for each room and I go around the house I always have one turn on and sometimes they are all turn on". However, Fátima never used the computer or the Internet; and her husband performs all online activities. However, it is completely different with the mobile phone, she has one over many years and she uses voice and text messages to keep in touch with friends and family and to coordinate the daily activities. She even uses it for her small handicraft business: "it keeps me company and it is also a way to feel safer. I once had a flat tire in the middle of nowhere and I truly regretted not having a mobile phone". Fátima also valued having a camera feature and took pictures of her grandchild to send or show his mother and keep as a souvenir.

Fátima never turns her mobile phone off and she carries it everywhere, in fact, she was one of the fewest women that kept her mobile phone on the table during the whole interview. Fátima is a good example that the mobile phone provides a communication channel for those women that have no Internet skills; it is their way of keeping in touch by sending text messages and conducting their casual conversation.

4   Conclusion, Discussion and Limitations

The paper's main aim was to better understand the trajectory of the mobile phone in older women's lives. A striking finding in our research was that the trajectory of the mobile phone across life-stages does not have an expected adoption curve as older women do not always correspond to the stereotype of lack of interest or skills, on the contrary the mobile phone seems to play a very important role in many of these older women's lives. Because this research was qualitative and restricted to Portugal and to an urban sample, it would be interesting to provide an extensive analysis through a cross-country quantitative survey based on a life-stage approach. It would also be interesting to compare older men and older women's life-stages and life courses and understand the differences in touch-points with technology and the difference in affordances at each life stage. This could serve as a basis for the definition of better gender politics in schools, companies and society at large.

In the stage of mature independent the irregular trajectory of the mobile phone becomes very clear. These women, some even above the age of 50, use the mobile phone in much the same way a young independent would use it; the mobile phone becomes again a social networking tool. For the empty nesters, the mobile phone brings a diversified set of affordances: safety, connection with the outside world, entertainment. These women even show a high usage rate and leisure practices when combined with low or lack of Internet skills. Fátima is one of the best examples of the deep connection that empty nesters can have with the mobile phone: "I feel naked without it (…). It is always in my pocket and goes with me everywhere (…). It is how I kept in touch and it is safety, now even more". We could not help but notice the resemblance between Fátima's discourse and that of the young dependent women interviewed. For the empty nesters, their fragility originates mainly on their own biological aging process that sometimes also leads to isolation. For them the mobile phone means safety and a lifeline to the outside world as well expressed in the words of Fátima: "I feel naked without it (…) it is always in my pocket and goes with me everywhere (…). It is how I keep in touch and it is safety, now even more". It is also a source of entertainment and leisure when combined with low Internet usage or lack of Internet skills.

What is transversal to all these women is that the mobile phone is always the most private and personal technology they use or own. They also show a high degree of dependency across life stages although, as we have seen, the underlying reasons for that dependency may vary.

Although many of the studies are centered on teenager's personalization practices, in the interviews the group of women that was more enthusiastic about personalization were the empty nesters, which might reinforce the job-phone effect theory. Empty nesters are retired and thus have only personal phones and have more freedom for personalization as explained by Manuela (56-year-old, pre-retired saleswoman, divorced in a new relationship, empty nester), an empty nester: "I have three mobile phones, one for each provider. I like to play games, take pictures and use the text-messages. I use the pictures that I take to personalize it and I have a ring-back tone service in two of them. I don't have it in all three because it becomes too expensive bit I like to know that when people are calling they are going to hear a music that I chose".

The paper gave voice to older women so that they could explain how the mobile phone affected their experience of mobility. The mobile phone enables women to keep in touch despite their space constrains. It becomes an especially useful tool when they see their mobility reduced in certain stages of their lives such as when they become older: "At this stage in my life is when I value it the most to be available and to be in touch with people and to do my things with grandchildren. I don't drive so I am always dependent on my husband to pick me up and the mobile is helpful to coordinate things". (Maria, 60-year-old, married empty nester). It allows them to extend to outer spaces a function that they valued so much in the landline telephone – keeping in touch with those that are emotionally important, it is what Klára Sándor calls "mental safety in your pocket" [29]: "It would be extremely complicated to be without the mobile phone. I would be a nervous rack. If I forget my mobile phone it seems that I am lost and that I need exactly all that I have on my mobile phone. I did not feel this before but now it seems that the mobile phone is part of us. I rarely forget it at home because the first thing I do in the morning is placing it in my handbag. I feel much more reassured when I have it and I now it is turned on, so I do not switch it off when I go to bed. Someone might need my help". (Fernanda F., 52-year-old, married, computer manager, empty nester)

In Portugal, a country that registers one of the highest employment rates for women, women's time constrains are high. According to the national survey on the uses of time [30] the combined professional work, household and family care average duration is 6.96 h for the employed male population and 8.67 h for women with the great discrepancy being that household chores only account for 20 min in the male population and 3 h in the female population. Leisure time is also reduced for women with the average being 2.30 for the male population and 1.42 for the female population. These numbers even show a bigger gap in the unemployed population where men only devote 2.08 h to household chores and family care versus 5.58 h for women and in the retired population where numbers are very similar 2.08 for men and 5.19 for women. These time differences are absorbed by leisure time to which retired men devote 5.26 h versus 3.24 h for women So, even in advanced life stages the constrains on women's tine are not reduced. This portrait of time constrains for retired women is well described by one of the empty nesters women interviewed: "I wake up in a hurry and I sleep in a hurry. Now that I am retired it is even worse than when I was working. In the morning must dress two kids, get them ready and take them to school. I come back to pick up my other granddaughter. Then I make lunch for her and my husband and I clean up the house. I give lunch to my granddaughter and at half past three I must pick the kids from school. We get home and it is time for bath e get my smallest granddaughter ready for her mother to pick her up and lately my daughter is doing her master's degree so many times she ends up sleeping over and instead of two grandchildren at my care I end up with three. It is time to get them asleep and go to sleep in a hurry so that the show can start all over again the next morning. My husband who is also retired only helps with the car pools. He sometimes only makes everything worse because he likes to see everything tide up but he only does something when it is strictly necessary or I ask him to do it. With all this I end up having little or no time for television or a book. I never had so little time as now. When I worked, I had more time. At the weekends it is time for heavy duty cleaning and sometimes we go

down to our house in the country where I also end up doing the cleaning". (Maria, 60-year-old, retired teacher, married, grandmother of three, empty nester)

Time is indeed the best example of how women have moved so much and at the same time, stand so still. Women live "in the fast lane" [31] and the accounts of daily routines of the women we interviewed are a vivid example of competing priorities, of juggling spheres, due to women's professional commitments. However, women's time is constrained by gendered domestic division of labor where women are still perceived to have the sole or main responsibility for household work and family care giving and management. This trait especially burdens mothers in dual earning households but is also extended into later life stages such as empty nesters with grandchildren to take care off. Women's time is also not theirs, their rhythms are dictated by others, by others' needs. In this context of "temporal crisis" many address the mobile phone as a tool of acceleration that would increase pressure on an already stressful environment. Nevertheless, what our interviews have shown once again is that the nature of a technology or an artefact can only be understood in the co-construction with user and context. Women have shown a clear agency in the use of the mobile phone. Experiences vary across life stages in accordance with different time needs but what they have in common is that the mobile phone was incorporated into their lives as a tool for the management of their interactions with family and friends and for the micro-coordination of their everyday lives.

Throughout their life stages, women face different challenges and needs that are expressed in different relationships with technology. It is not a linear progression but instead is related to their "situated knowledges" and specific locations. Each woman tells a different story, has a different voice. The question is if someone is listening.

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