

**Complicating mobilities, complicating lives:
technology, everyday routines and embodied times in *Fortnight***

Draft Chapter for *As We See It*

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You might think you know Lancaster. You do, in fact. You know where the best place to see two old people kissing is. You know where the worst neighbourhood is. You know where the best place is to see a beautiful sunset. But what you know is only a fragment. The more you challenge yourself to shift how you move through where you move, the more the city will move you. Maybe this is obvious too.

(received via email, 9pm, *Fortnight* Day 1)

Everyday lives are filled with movement – mobilities of people, of objects, of ideas that facilitate and transform our everyday practices. These movements, and the technologies that support them, become meaningful in many ways – shaping what we know about work, play and social relationships (Cresswell, 2006). As Ingold has argued, movement and technologies are central to how people understand and experience the world. Knowledge is never simply static: ‘One can no more know *in* places than travel in them. Rather, knowledge is regional: it is to be cultivated by moving along paths that lead around, towards or away from place, from or to places elsewhere’ (Ingold, 2000: 229). How we know communities, cities and countries is therefore linked to how we move through them – whether physically, virtually or communicatively. Moreover, our experiences of the world are radically shaped by the technologies that facilitate movement and indeed move alongside us. Even the ubiquitous technology of the shoe has profoundly affected how people relate to the environments they traverse (Ingold, 2004). Moving with technologies is part of reproducing the world as we know it, and likewise adding new technologies and travel can complicate and shift what we know about where we live. Attending to how mobilities, and mobile technology, affect knowledge about the world has therefore emerged as a growing concern for both social scientists and artists (Cresswell, 2006; McCann, 2011; Peck and Theodore, 2010; Pinder, 2001; Sheller and Urry, 2006b; Wilken, 2010).

This chapter critically reflects upon Proto-type Theater’s *Fortnight* project, which playfully and reflexively complicates places and the lives within them. By offering new opportunities for using technologies and moving through city spaces, the project intervenes in both how participants know their city and what they know about it.

This two-week long interactive multi-media experience explicitly positions itself at the intersection of mobile technologies and everyday movements. As the company’s website describes, *Fortnight*:

is a theatrical intervention into the daily lives of those who sign up, that takes place largely via the modes of communication we use everyday (mobile phone, email, and post) and through invitations to interact with objects located throughout the city. (Proto-type Theater, 2011)

Participants hand over their contact details and then receive and respond to various messages. Some messages prompt personal reflection, some ask questions or seek to begin conversations, and some point out sites in the city where unknown experiences await. A shared twitter account provides a contemporary party line so that participants can interact anonymously with each other, and each participant is given a small felt badge containing an RFID chip that provides personalized access to objects and tasks. I followed the project online during its first production in Bristol, May 2011 and subsequently undertook research as a participant-observer in Lancaster, UK in October 2011.¹

This paper reflects upon how *Fortnight* complicates participants' everyday mobilities, and by doing so their knowledge of city life. To suggest that the project 'complicates' everyday life is not meant to imply that participants found the experience negative. Indeed, many grew immensely attached to the communications received, the opportunities presented, and the people involved. Rather, complication is used here as an ambivalent term acknowledging that *Fortnight* creates the potential for additional complexity in everyday life. Since the offerings it provides are intentionally incomplete – they don't add up to one complete story and can be taken up or not with few consequences – participants are left to participate and interpret the work as they see fit. There are no preferable or ideal outcomes, nor any way to 'win'. Whether opportunities are taken or ignored, the *Fortnight* continues. How then, in this deliberately fragmentary project do opportunities to move through virtual, communicative and physical arenas affect everyday lives in the city?

In the following section, the project is contextualized within social scientific literature on mobile lives and cities. As McQuire and Radywyl have pointed out, media technology is no longer simply a *medium* for art – it is 'becoming a general *environment* within which all cultural production, including art, takes place' (2010: 6). Understanding the wider social transformations that media technologies are linked to, and how they change communicative and physical mobilities in cities, is important for reflecting upon the possibilities and contributions of technologically-engaged art. The second section moves on to consider the spatio-temporal routines that *Fortnight* unsettles and creates. Its itinerary of potential interactions is presented as a structure offering new ways of moving and knowing the city. While members of Proto-type Theater are aware of this structure during the project, participants enter with only an understanding that they have given away their contact information and been asked to keep a few evenings free. Participant experiences therefore unfold in a different way – as embodied encounters with media and the city. The third section therefore shifts to consider how, by situating itself within daily routines, *Fortnight* creates embodied times of interruption and waiting.

Mobile cities, mobile lives

While social scientists once sought to explain the social world through understandings of bounded nations and situated local communities, technological and societal changes have

¹ I documented the project by archiving all of my communications as a participant, taking photographs of spaces I was led to, and writing extensive field notes. After the project, I collected online reviews and gave a short written questionnaire to several Lancaster and Bristol participants. The company provided a selection of anonymised communication records generated during the Lancaster project.

increasingly foregrounded the importance of movement to social life. Not only travelling people, but moving objects, and communicative, virtual and imaginative flows abound (Urry, 2007: 47). On the one hand these changes are technological and (infra)structural. The networked technologies of air travel, international shipping, global telephony and the Internet keep complex processes of production, consumption, sociality and innovation literally in motion. Moreover, while cities have always been spaces of mobility – of ports and roads, commodity flows and radio towers, tourism and disease vectors – the possibilities provided by mobile technologies reconfigure social life (Sheller and Urry, 2006a). Mobile phones, GPS and RFID tags are among the technologies that are changing spatialities and temporalities of connection, communication and co-presence.

A decade ago the proliferation of communities and interactions on the internet sparked discussions of cyberspace and the virtual, and today the ability to take the internet along with you via mobile phones highlights the potential for new ways of knowing and being in space. The interactivity of Web 2.0 makes the city a new world that is ‘continually reproduced in material and representational terms’ (Hardey, 2007: 879). Cities have become a ‘hybrid space’ marked by a network of mobile technologies facilitating practices that are simultaneously digital, physical, social and mobile (de Souza e Silva, 2006: 265). This mixture of concrete and virtual is also evident in how the city is made and re-made by ‘cybermobilities’ that are ‘transmaterial’ and challenge the boundaries of material and immaterial worlds (Adey and Bevan, 2006: 44). By drawing attention to and complicating city spaces, mobile technologies have the potential to act as interventions in social life and in art.

Yet the affect of new technologies on moving and knowing in cities is also more personal than discussions of hybridity and cybermobilities imply. Technologies bring with them opportunities for new affective and emotional registers (Löfgren, 2008; Sheller, 2004), as well as new means of communication and community (Wellman, 2002; Wellman, 2004). More importantly for this chapter, new technologies have the potential to change the spatio-temporality of everyday routines.

Consider for instance basic everyday activities such as working, exercising and shopping. As time-geographers have argued, these activities are space-time phenomena, and therefore people’s lives are trajectories – ‘a weaving dance through time-space’ (Pred, 1977: 206). Everyday routines not only involve repeated activities, but also repeated travels to spaces where working, exercising and shopping are possible. Yet information and communication technologies, including the internet and mobile phone, significantly alter the space-time constraints of everyday activities. Mobile technologies have created both the opportunity and the increasing obligation to work during one’s commute (Holley, Jain and Lyons, 2008), and even consumption can now occur in both real worlds and digital ones (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth, 2010a; Denegri-Knott and Molesworth, 2010b). In this way, mobile phones and Web 2.0 challenge previous limitations around doing more than one task at a time, as well as assumptions about where activities can occur and the amount of travel necessary to switch between them (Schwanen and Kwan, 2008: 1363-1364). Information and communication technologies also weaken the association between activities and specific places, and ‘an activity thus becomes more likely to be performed in discontinuous chunks at arbitrary times’ (Couclelis, 2009: 1559). Shopping, for instance, may now involve information-gathering and price comparisons done online or on a mobile device in-store, and purchases or returns can later be made in person,

online or by mail (Couclelis, 2009: 1560). Mobile technologies in this way shift communicative and virtual mobilities at the same time as complicating opportunities for personal corporeal travel.

It is within this environment of technological change that *Fortnight* embraces and plays with the complexity of everyday trajectories. While participating in theatre has traditionally involved travelling to specific built spaces and taking discrete chunks of time out of everyday schedules, new media technologies provide opportunities to shift the temporality and spatiality of performances. An SMS or email can be received from almost anywhere, at almost any time. Where one is doesn't matter if one has an internet-capable mobile phone to hand. When artistic projects are delivered using these media, the co-presence, travel, and pre-scheduling of traditional theatre experiences can all be re-negotiated. *Fortnight* does just this – playing with the potentials of new technologies so that 'participating in theatre' can be done in a variety of spaces and at a variety of times. While some events are static, or pre-scheduled, others are flexible. Participants can dip in and out of the project – reading some messages immediately and saving others to be read later. The temporality of *Fortnight* is therefore not self-contained, but something that emerges in dialogue with everyday life. As Sullivan recounts from interviews with Proto-type Theater:

The two-week period is important as it allows the work to happen in real time: Proto-type were interested in what can be done in two weeks that cannot be done in a typical hour-and-a-half show. The work does not want to remove people from everyday situations and so operates in real time. (Sullivan, 2011: 15)

If mobile technologies themselves complicate how people move through and understand their everyday spaces, then *Fortnight* provides an additional level of complexity by creating the potential for moments and spaces of art to blossom in real time and real spaces.

The remainder of this chapter considers two dimensions of this complexity. First, the next section examines how the project's distinct itinerary compels participants to reconsider or re-read their routines. The following section then focuses on the complex embodied times enacted through participation.

An itinerary for breaking routines

Though perhaps not as concerned with exceptionality as tourist itineraries, everyday space-time paths are similarly structured by the desire or requirement to visit certain places and do certain things. Just as Wang argues that tourist itineraries 'become an arena [and organizing structure] in which the tourist experience is socially produced' (2006: 65-66), everyday itineraries chalk out the bounds of experience. Sometimes we manage to do everything on our lists, and sometimes meetings overrun and places remain unvisited. In this sense everyday itineraries are flexible, and crucially related to the accomplishment of goals. While many artistic projects remain but one item on an itinerary, artists have increasingly explored how they can create itineraries of their own. *Fortnight*, by offering a diverse set of communicative prompts and embodied diversions over two weeks, does just this. By offering a structure of possibilities it attempts to re-organizes participants' explorations of their cities and routines.

Each weekday morning at 9am *Fortnight* sends an SMS message that introduces a potential adventure for the day. A location is introduced, alongside its opening hours, with the invitation that participants can visit a 'portal' installed there if they have the chance. Each location is open for one day only, and so each morning gives a glimpse into only part of the future itinerary. The routines of *Fortnight's* itinerary also involve other modes of communication. Most evenings a 9pm email arrives in participants' inboxes, offering musings on some theme and potentially a link to photos or videos or webpages of interest. While the days of the project are bracketed in these repetitive communications, the itinerary also proves unpredictable. Both SMS and email communications arrive at unexpected times, and postal mail is delivered at times outside the control of even the theatre company. Some communications provide invitations to the pre-scheduled mass events, while others provide open-ended musings. Moreover, in addition to the communications pushed to participants, people can respond to messages, view the project website or use the shared Twitter account at any time of day. Figure 1 captures the broad outlines of this itinerary in Lancaster, marking the temporality of *Fortnight's* mass communications, those events that are standardized and available to all participants.

While *Fortnight* is structured around cultural conventions regarding waking and working hours and the difference between weekdays and weekends (Zerubavel, 1985), its itinerary can't possibly attend to the unique trajectories of participants' lives. Each participant lives in one place, works in another, and enacts a unique pattern while moving through everyday routines. It is in trying to address the initial independence of everyday and artistic itineraries that the project becomes complicated. Depending upon how flexible or rigid pre-established schedules and commitments are, fitting *Fortnight* in among everyday routines presents different obstacles and challenges.

In some cases, particularly where work commitments are inflexible or spatially distant from the project's locations, participants found that everyday life made visiting *Fortnight's* temporary installations very difficult:

When I took part, although I was living in Bristol and many of the "activities" were within easy walking distance of my home, I was working in Swindon. This made it difficult to get to some of the activities so either there was some serious rushing home from work involved or I missed out. (Medea, Bristol)

Depending on the contours of everyday itineraries, and where they take people, re-arranging the paths of everyday life to fit in diversions may not be possible, particularly upon short notice. Though one could receive messages and participate online from anywhere, these virtual and communicative interactions weren't always enough. For Mark, the frustration of incommensurable physical itineraries became overwhelming:

because [Mark] leaves Lancaster [for work] early and doesn't return until 5.30 or 6pm, he couldn't take part in most of the activities, and he quickly became frustrated and lost interest. (Henrietta (Mark's partner and fellow participant), Lancaster)

Other participants in Bristol tweeted at moments when the lack of fit between *Fortnight* itineraries and their everyday ones became significant:

Too tricky to make daytime appointments and it's all felt a little one-way and isolating so far... Lonely duck :-((Bristol tweet, 3 May 2011)

I feel like heidi stuck inside watching all the other children playing. Watching the clock tick down till freedom o'clock (Bristol tweet, 3 May 2011)

In this way, the project makes one's embodied relationship with the city matter. The ability to take part, to craft experiences and memories of *Fortnight*, is tied to proximity and the merging of itineraries. Being near or far from spaces that may have had no prior role in everyday life becomes charged with importance. In this way, the temporality of one's relationship to the city shapes opportunities for participation.

While some people's everyday itineraries did not fit well alongside *Fortnight*, others' lives became transformed. By making space and time for the project, new routines emerged:

Where I could I tried to fit *Fortnight* in as a new routine. It readily became a part of my daily life, and when I could not make actual trips to things suggested in the process, the texting, and the emails and the things that could be done in your own way and at your own time became a part of the journey. (Lucy, Lancaster)

since I work mostly flexible hours, I often changed my daily routine so that I would be able to go and find the locations mentioned. I also found myself doing things near those locations instead of closer to my flat just because I was there, like shopping (Quill, Lancaster)

By taking opportunities to move differently through their cities, participants created space for realizations that their embodied knowledge of the city was tied to the temporality of their movements through it:

I wandered down to the library and was surprised by how many people were out and about. I guess I don't get out much on Friday afternoons. (Personal field notes, 21 October 2011)

I never thought beforehand how much different my daily experience of the city would be, going out at different times than usual, for example. (Quill, Lancaster)

Therefore, while taking up alternative itineraries in everyday life is not always an easy task, and may be one littered with constraints around work obligations, the rewards can be significant. *Fortnight's* itinerary provided an excuse to move through the city differently, and for those who took this opportunity, new insights and knowledge emerged.

While it is important to understand how *Fortnight's* itinerary structured opportunities for engagement, this itinerary was a more explicit reality for the team running the project than its participants. For participants, new experiences unfolded in unexpected ways over time, and as a part of embodied encounters. The next section therefore considers how the project complicated not only itineraries but embodied times in the city.

Embodied times

While with hindsight participants can reflect upon the routines of *Fortnight* and how these affected their everyday lives, during the project much remains unknown to them. It takes several days before one begins to recognize patterns in the communications received – that 9am SMS can be relied upon during the week and that mid-afternoon often brings an SMS with a question in it. Beyond these rhythms of clock time, however, *Fortnight* shifts embodied times in the city. The virtual and communicative flows of the project create experiences of time that change how people relate to the world around them. This section therefore briefly highlights two of the embodied times that add complexity to everyday routines. Both experiences of interruption and of waiting draw attention to the habitual temporalities of everyday life and how the embodiment of routines, cities, and knowledge can be re-arranged.

Interrupting

9:00am, Monday 17 October 2011 (Day One field notes)

I'm in the middle of doing yoga when my mobile beeps – I have a new SMS. Though I don't usually interrupt my practice, I'm curious about what it will be.

Morning Allison. Hope you have found your delivery. It's starting

Immediately, I find the lack of punctuation at the end of the text annoying. What is starting? Is something starting to do something? Or is it just that *Fortnight* is starting? Slightly irked and still waiting for something more, I return to yoga.

9:00am, Wednesday 19 October 2011 (Day Three field notes)

I get my morning SMS while blowing my nose in the toilet of Ash House. My first thought is 'I should take a picture of where I am'.

3:25pm Monday 24 October 2011 (Day Eight field notes)

I read an SMS message that I've just discovered when I went looking in my purse for my notebook.

Afternoon Allison. Following the weekend, it might seem like life is all work and no play. What do you do to keep yourself from descending into a black hole of working all the time? Any good tricks? x

I am half inclined to respond, but go back to the emails I was addressing.

The unscheduled nature of many *Fortnight* interactions means that, at least initially, the experience of the project is closely linked with interruption. SMS text messages arrive at times that are both convenient and inconvenient, making one's status as a *Fortnight* participant pierce the other roles and activities of everyday life. In some instances, the fragments are frustrating and seemingly insufficient. In others, the juxtaposition of real world spaces and artistic

communications seems absurd – investing even blowing one’s nose with a strange sense of importance. At other times, there is no time. The invitations to respond are enticing, but fail to compete with other preoccupations.

This embodiment of interruption is very personal, insofar as it affects each participant in different ways. Yet it is also a shared symptom of the intersection of technological mobilities and art. McQuire and Radywyl discuss how the very unfolding and emerging of technologically-embedded art changes basic relationships between participants and the work itself: ‘Art is no longer defined by the production of finished objects or polished forms, but is becoming an encounter – an event – in which audience, technological interface and institutional setting are increasingly implicated’ (2010: 14-15). Though these authors primarily discuss work sited in art galleries, *Fortnight* offers evidence that mobile technologies are increasingly capable of making artistic events mobile and temporal in ways previously unexplored. Yet in this exploration, audiences lose some control. When art works have a timing of their own, which cannot be controlled by the audience, participation becomes colored by a sense of coercion and incompleteness. Walking up to a video installation on a pre-set loop, for instance, prompts a feeling of having always missed something and therefore not knowing exactly what is going on (Groys, 2001 in McQuire and Radywyl, 2010: 15). In *Fortnight*, the feeling of missing out is tempered by deliberately fragmentary messages. Eventually one realizes that not all suggestions are later elaborated upon, that there isn’t one master puzzle that must be worked out. Yet throughout the project a sense of interruption remains. SMS messages and emails emerge and pull participants away from other focuses, other tasks, for an instant or a long time.

Though such interruptions are increasingly normal due to the prevalence of mobile technologies, in *Fortnight* they take on a new character. In *Fortnight* the interruptions are connected, bringing a seeming unity – hazy as it may remain – to the whole experience. To participate in the project is to be repeatedly interrupted and asked to do or consider something other than what you are currently doing. Those who cannot escape work may be haunted by their immobility, leaving the interruptions as unwelcome reminders of the obligations we take on and the flexibility we sacrifice. Yet for others interruptions are much needed and easily embraced – they provide opportunities for diversion from boring tasks or the mindless repetition of the everyday. Interruptions are therefore visceral reminders of the lack of control we have over increasingly pervasive media flows, and project’s complexity offers a chance to make these interruptions mindful and meaningful.

Waiting

If interruptions mark breaks and disturbances in the continuity of activities, then waiting characterizes elongations. As Bissell notes, the etymology of the word ‘wait’ suggests ‘a sense of anticipatory preparedness – a lying-in-wait-for’ (Bissell, 2007: 282). As much as *Fortnight* is about interruption and a coercive push to shift routines, it is also about this embodied anticipation. What the project might become is never certain, in part because of the interactive role that participants can embrace. Waiting for communications, for hints, for replies, for your turn to interact therefore becomes a central part of the experience.

At times, interruption and waiting are bound together, since travelling to temporary sites for art involves uncertain temporalities:

9:15am, Monday 19 October 2011 (Day One field notes)

Hi again. If you have time today, find the red phone in the lobby of the Penny St Bridge (LA11XT). Bring your badge & tap it on the phone book between 11am-8pm.

Right away I start thinking about whether I do have time today. It's not 11am yet, so it hasn't even started. I wonder about going around lunch, but then wonder whether everyone (whoever they are and however many of them there are) will be going at that time. Maybe I'll go on my way to the university – but I don't know how long it will take, so that might also involve waiting.

The very fact that *Fortnight* sparks irregular journeys to potentially unfamiliar spaces increases the potential for waiting both along the journey and at its end. We know cities by virtue of our repeated patterns through them, which makes unfamiliar paths potential adventures that might go wrong. One tweet from Bristol gives a sense of the richness of these embodied movements, and the moments of waiting within them:

Walk 20 mins 2train station forget purse run back get bus get wrong bus run for 20 mins wrong turn go back find house wait another 30 mins (Bristol tweet, 12 May 2011)

Though waiting is often ignored or brushed off due to its association with immobility, Bissell suggests the relation between action and inaction makes it not only ubiquitous but rich (2007). Periods of waiting, he suggests, are 'incipient rich durations, . . . banal and prosaic hiatuses' (Bissell, 2007: 279). Since *Fortnight* creates opportunities to wait where before there were none, the richness of the project can emerge precisely from the hiatus and inactivity it marks in relation to everyday routines.

Take for instance the queues that occasionally formed at the project's daily installations around the city. Since many tasks involved swiping one's RFID badge and then observing how technological objects responded, participation was often an individual activity. If other participants arrived at the same time, formal or informal queues would form as they waited to have a turn and see what the portal offered or asked. These hiatuses, these rich durations, offered moments of reflection and interaction. In Bristol, moments of waiting provided photo opportunities and contemplations of whimsy:

I wanted to poke my fingers in the honey jar, but the others didn't let me.. If I had been waiting alone I probably would have... (Bristol tweet, 12 May 2011)

Waiting for tonight's task [instagr.am/p/EMnRM/](https://www.instagram.com/p/EMnRM/) [instagr.am/p/EMm1Y/](https://www.instagram.com/p/EMm1Y/) Lots of smiles on exit. (Bristol tweet, 13 May 2011)

My own experience of waiting was similarly rich. On one of the last days of the project, I showed up at a portal to find eight people waiting in a small round pod around a round table. The nature of the space made avoiding each other impossible, and so we began to talk. We spoke about how long the others had been waiting, and how long people were spending on the task that was still unknown to us. Despite the long wait, people were good humored, and happy to share their

experiences of the project – what they had made it to and what they had missed. As we discussed moments of confusion and of delight, it became clear that despite the uniqueness of our experiences, and the fact we were strangers, we were sharing something. While Sullivan notes that during *Fortnight* ‘each participant’s experience was unique to them, happening in their own time’ (2011: 15), the process of waiting together revealed the intersections of our embodied times. Throughout the project, even when waiting alone, we were somehow waiting together. The embodied complexity of *Fortnight* thus helped to reveal how our knowledge of city life are not necessarily individual at all – we move through and wait in cities together, even when we fail to recognize it.

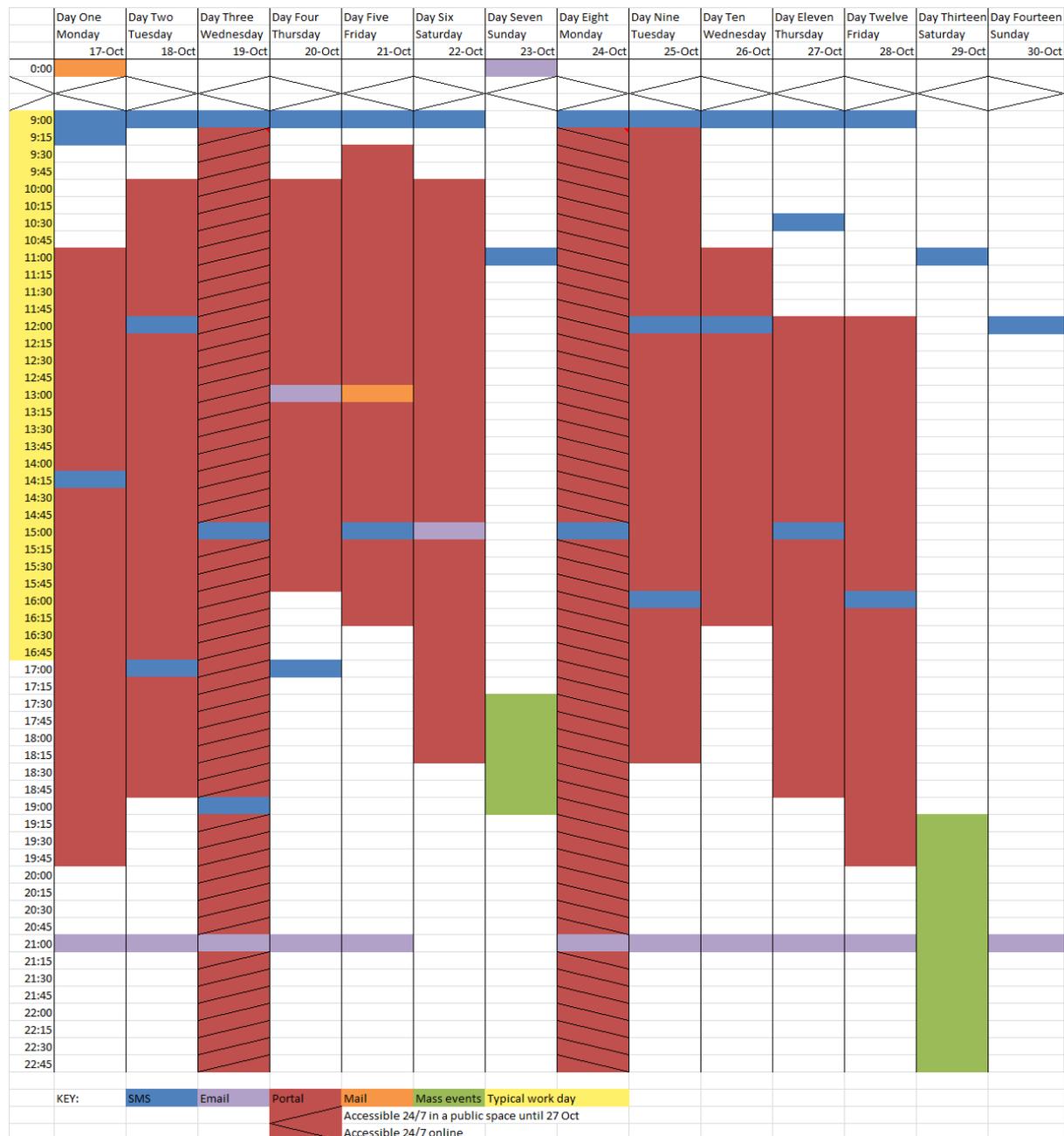
Conclusion

Though discussions of technology and art too easily become mesmerized by the new and innovative, it is in the complicated world where old and new collide that most lives are lived. Old routines and new itineraries fight for precedence. Interruptions steal attention while waiting gives it back. Engaging with an environment of mobile technologies is therefore wrapped up in complexity – not only because of the complex nature of the technologies themselves, but because of the complicated ways they are woven into everyday lives.

By examining both structural itineraries and embodied times, this chapter has illustrated the value of embedding artistic experiments with technology, temporalities and spatialities into the complexity of everyday lives. While such experimentation both rests upon and produces uncertainty, it also provides room for reflection and new routines. Though its itinerary may coerce people to fit their lives around the project, its purposely incomplete and fragmentary nature leaves space for personalization.

Artists can never know the full details of the lives into which their projects intervene. Yet by considering how cities are made up of routines, itineraries and bodies as well as symbols, spaces and stories, openings for intervening in the everyday emerge. These openings provide rich opportunities for interdisciplinary collaborations, and for explorations of how the many ways that we move through cities come to shape and re-shape our understandings of the world. It may be obvious that how we move affects what we know about the world, but by troubling and playing with this movement, projects such as *Fortnight* provide opportunities to know differently – to re-write our cities and the routines within them one footstep at a time.

Figure 1 – The temporalities of *Fortnight’s* Lancaster itinerary



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