Always connected = Always Available?
The Role of Microboundaries

Marta E. Cecchinato

UCL

Motivation

How do our current communication technologies support and challenge boundary work in knowledge workers?

Understanding Current Practices

Email Management across Devices & Accounts

Semi-structured interviews with university employees (n=16)

Notifications, Awareness Cues, & Smartwatches

Interviews with early adopters (n=16) & 2-month autoethnography

Managing and Inferring Availability

Diary study & pre- and post-interviews with groups of knowledge workers (n=17)

Intervention workshops

Participatory workshops to implement microboundaries with 2-week & 2-month follow-ups (n=17)

What are Microboundaries?

A microboundary is a user-strategy that provides a small friction prior to an interaction.

Stop and think: *is this what you really want to do?*

This small barrier to interaction **prevents us rushing from one context to another,** helping us become more mindful of how we interact with technology for work and personal reasons.
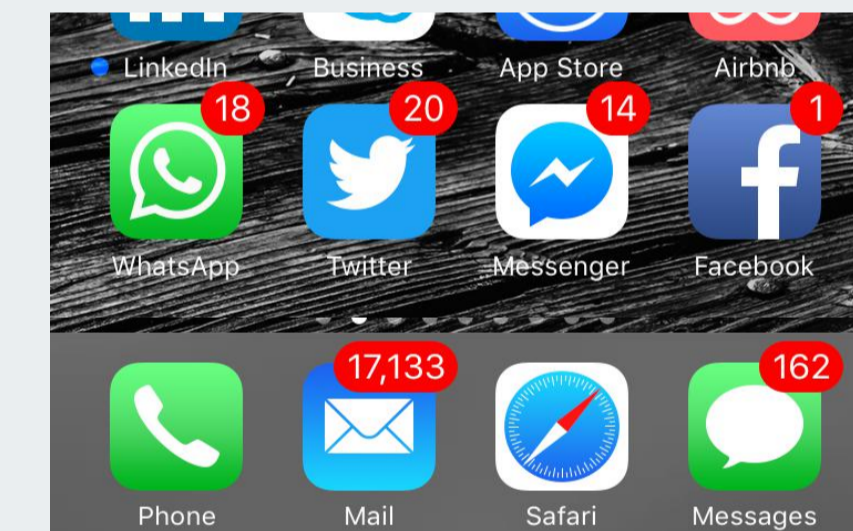
Types of Microboundaries for Value-Led Behaviour

Device based
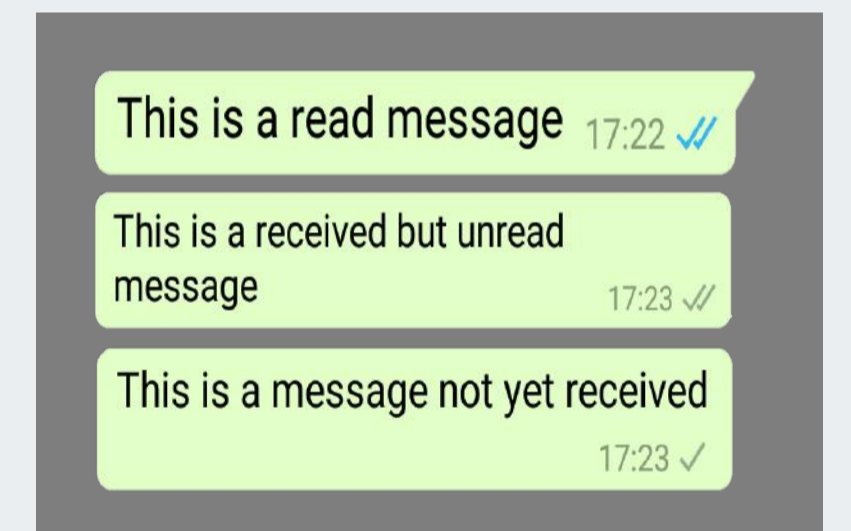e.g. using a smartwatch to filter out phone notifications

Application based
e.g. having separate apps for work & personal email

Notification based
e.g. setting manual or automatic rules for alerts

Feature based
e.g. disabling particular awareness cues

Contributions & Impact

Theoretical contribution to:
- Boundary theory (organisational psychology)
- Cross-device experience & computer-mediated communication (HCI)

Practical implications for:
- **Individuals**
- Designers and developers
- Company policies and guidelines

Take Control of Your Boundaries!

Diary template:
goo.gl/cmf9qf

Microboundary strategies:
goo.gl/OJRw6W

Taking Control of Work-Life Balance with Microboundaries

Research-Informed Strategies

m.cecchinato@cs.ucl.ac.uk | @MartaCecchinato | cecchinato.me

For more info: **DigitalBoundariesResearch.wordpress.com**

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