

# Exploring a Methodology for Tracing Spatial, Social and Textual Networks through Neighbourhoods

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**Abstract:** This study, currently in progress, is concerned with the circulation of knowledge, practice and objects related to parenting through three contrasting neighbourhoods. This project is motivated by a desire to better understand how parents in different circumstances access, share and produce knowledge about children's learning and development. We are considering the impact of affordances provided by the spatial and social environment including information points (on- and off-line), displays and meeting places as well as patterns of usage. Here we describe our methodology which incorporates travelling in and through neighbourhoods, visual documentation, mapping, artefact collection, observation, excursions into cyberspace, interviews, collaborative analysis and various methods of representing networks. We discuss the influence of ecological approaches, network theory and geosemiotics on our approach and offer emerging insights from the first year of the project.

## Introduction

Educational researchers interested in young children's learning and development have generally focused their attention on educational sites such as schools and kindergartens and on the home. The neighbourhood has rarely been considered as educationally important except insofar as it is associated with the demographic characteristics of the community. In this paper we explain how our interest in parents' roles in young children's learning lead us to design a project focused on networks and including neighbourhoods as a key element. We discuss the influence of ecological systems theory, network theory and geosemiotics on the methodological design and share some early insights from the study. We describe a pilot study and how this helped us to develop a methodology for the current study.<sup>1</sup> Finally, we present a case study to illustrate the interaction of personal, social and spatial dimensions in a parent's resourcing priorities and activities.

## Resourcing parents: geographic, social and virtual affordances

Mothers' and fathers' understanding of how best to foster children's learning and development (CLD) is a vital element in optimising children's learning, particularly in the home to school transition period (Hannon et al., 2006, Mikulecky, 1996). Families' differential access to educational knowledge and resources is a factor in children's unequal learning outcomes (Bennett et al., 2002, Griffith and Smith, 2005). For this reason, our project focuses on how parents and caregivers access the kinds of resources which can assist them to support their young children's learning.

Resources accessed by parents include textual information in multiple forms (magazines, posters, leaflets, web-sites etc), material objects (such as educational toys), word-of-mouth advice (both formal and informal) and observable practices (i.e. formal and informal modelling and demonstration). When considering this diverse array of resources, it is clear that in order to track their circulation we need to consider geographic, social and virtual dimensions. In other words, we need to consider:

- How resources are spatially located;
- How resources are circulated through immediate social interactions;
- How resources are made available through digital environments;
- The interactions between all these elements.

For example, a community centre's location near a kindergarten may attract local parents. The brightly lit lobby with comfortable chairs may encourage users to browse the leaflet display. A leaflet taken home might be put up on the fridge with a magnet for reference at another time. The URL on this leaflet might prompt the parent to access a web-site. This web-site might have an online ordering system for educational toys. A visiting parent might see one of these toys and ask where it was bought, and so on. It was just such examples encountered in our pilot study that influenced the development of a methodology for tracing these circulations in geographic, social and virtual space.

## The ecological survey

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The field of early childhood education has a tradition of using ecological systems theory to theorise the relationship between the home and the school as interconnecting systems (McNaughton, 2001, Brofenbrenner, 1979). Understanding the relationship between these two systems has been of particular interest in determining optimal ways to support young children's transition from one environment to the other. Less often investigated, but of interest to us, is a third system, that of the community. Two studies which have particularly influenced our approach incorporate the study of neighbourhoods as part of a wider ecological analysis of interconnected systems for supporting educational outcomes.

Good et al. and colleagues investigated 'opportunities for democratic participation in legitimated social institutions' in a disadvantaged multi-ethnic neighbourhood (1997, p. 278). Their study employed ecological analysis to 'locate resources, structures, and niches and ... examine their adaptations and interdependence over time' (Good et al., 1997, p. 278). The method combined traditional ethnographic methods of observation and interviewing with more spatially oriented methods including walking streets and drawing detailed maps of the location of community sites, information points and resources.

Neuman and Celano (2001) conducted a comparative study of four neighbourhoods in terms of the opportunities they offered for children and their families to engage in literacy related activities. They argue that 'learning and development cannot be considered apart from the individual's social environment, the ecological niche' (Neuman and Celano, 2001, p. 8). Their method involved walking through a block of each neighbourhood and systematically noting: every store and stand likely to sell reading materials, every sign and its condition (readability), public spaces where reading could be undertaken, and relevant institutional sites (libraries, child care centres, etc). They found that neighbourhoods of different socio-economic status showed 'major and striking differences at almost all levels' in terms of access to literacy resources and opportunities (Neuman and Celano, 2001, p. 15).

How our current study employs the ecological survey method will be discussed later in the paper but first, the influences of geosemiotics and network theory will be considered as we build the methodological framework.

### **The semiotics of place**

Information resources can be understood as signs or as compositions of signs employing one or more of a range of modalities including language, visual images, sound and materiality (eg. texture). Individuals encountering these signs read them not simply at the level of basic decoding but interpretively, using their access to social and cultural frameworks for construing meaning.

Information resources (excluding, for the moment, those accessed online) are located in specific local places. A pamphlet may, for instance, be pinned up on a noticeboard in a dark corner of a community centre lobby which, during playgroup time, is so full of prams and pushers that one cannot get close enough to read it (this example was taken from our pilot study). A community centre may be located near a busy suburban shopping strip or in a residential area away from other services and facilities. These two examples show different levels of spatial context, both of which are significant not only in how (and whether) the information resource is accessed, but also in how its meaning is interpreted. The location of a resource can signal its value or importance through its size, centrality or its appearance in multiple locations.

In considering this aspect of our study, we have drawn on the work of Scollon and Scollon (2003) who have developed, through their comparative research on city spaces, the conceptual framework of geosemiotics. This framework consists of three interacting systems: the interaction order (how people interact in place), visual semiotics (how texts and images are 'read' in place), and semiotics of place (how materiality and space is 'read'). These three systems are brought together in the concept of the *semiotic aggregate*. An example given by these authors is the shopping mall. This is a particular pertinent example; reconnaissance at one of the malls in our study indicates that community organisations as well as businesses utilise space in malls for the display of goods and services specifically related to CLD. In complex places such as a mall, 'multiple semiotic systems [are] in a dialogical interaction with each other' (Scollon and Scollon, 2003, p. 12).

For example, the hub of one of the South Australian sites in our study is a busy commercial and local government precinct which includes a very large covered mall run by the Westfield group. The mall contains three main information points for shoppers: two 'Concierge Desks' run by mall management and one 'Community Information Booth' run by the local council. From the Concierge Desks parents can source information about services offered in the mall (eg. the locations of

shops that sell children's clothes, shoes and toys; the parents' room; children's play area; the Community Information Booth). Parents are also advised that they can 'make life a little easier' if they 'register' their child as a Westfield Kid and 'enjoy lots of benefits' that registration brings:

Registered parents receive special offers and kids entertainment information before everyone else. We'll also save you the hassle of searching for things to do with the kids, information, facilities or kids' services.

.... We'll also send them a welcome gift, a letter from Santa and a birthday card.

In this way the mall management establishes a potentially dialogic relationship with shoppers. The Westfield Kid program enables management to establish a register of shoppers' home addresses, and phone and email contact details, which can be then used to contact parents directly and offer enticements to bring families back into the mall. Centre management at once signals that it wishes to have a caring relationship with parents and their young children, and establishes a process by which it can have regular contact with them. At the same time, the Centre ensures that their other clients, the shop owners, receive a regular flow of parents and children to potentially buy merchandise, collect catalogues and potentially pass them on to friends, family and other future shoppers.

### **Network theory and analysis**

Since we are concerned with families' access to resources for supporting children's learning, the role of networks in facilitating this access is central to our focus. In considering existing knowledge and conceptual frameworks, we acknowledge the contribution of two different strands of network theory – social network analysis and actor network theory (ANT). In relation to the spatialised local dimension (the neighbourhood), we consider the contribution network analysis might make to the place-based ecological assessment.

#### ***Social networks***

A social network is generally defined in terms of social linkages or ties (Bridge, 2002, Vera and Schupp, 2006). The analysis of social networks can focus on the interpersonal level (ties between individuals) or on broader levels such as the institutional (ties between organisations). Both levels are relevant to our study since educational resources can be circulated within families' immediate social contacts but are also produced and circulated by and through organisations such as schools, libraries, health services and businesses. The analysis of social networks most often employs quantitative methods such as surveys to measure network characteristics such as size and density (cf Hlebec et al., 2006). However, qualitative data such as interviews and observations have also been analysed using the descriptive language of social network theory (cf Horvat et al., 2003).

A relevant example of a quantitative analysis is Saulnier and Rowland's (1985) study of support networks for mothers identified as 'high risk' in terms of caring for their children. Here the focus was only on members of what is termed the 'core network' or those individuals who can be called on for significant and timely support. A survey was used to measure individuals' networks in terms of size (number of supportive contacts), kinds of support and frequency of contact. Daily logs were also used to gather data regarding actual interactions. As predicted, the mean size of core networks for this group was small (fewer than 10) which meant that multiple support functions were undertaken by few individuals. Also of interest was the low mean for core network members who were also professionals in service roles (fewer than 2), suggesting that sources of advice and information were far more likely to be informal than expert in nature. However, the lack of qualitative data for the study meant little detail was available regarding mothers' experiences of networking or the specific nature of the support provided, and none at all regarding the kinds of parenting resources made available through these networks.

A qualitative approach is taken by Horvat and Weinger et al. (2003) in their comparative study of working-class and middle-class parents' networks related to their children's schooling. Here parents' accounts elicited through in-depth interviews, and observational field notes, were analysed to provide evidence of families' network profiles, the resources which these gave them access to, and whether these networks and resources were used to advantage children's education. Their findings were broadly consistent with those from quantitative studies, particularly that working-class parents' networks were more family-oriented and locally based than middle-class networks. However, including parents' accounts of their educational activities, within a network analysis, enabled some interesting new insights. The researchers were struck by '[t]he role of children's activities in determining the shape of parents' networks' (Horvat et al., 2003, p. 328) and how this reinforced class differences. Middle-class parents often met other parents in the course of taking their children to extra-curricular

activities such as ballet and Scouts. The ties formed through these joint activities were then mobilised to gain resources and support such as information and collective lobbying power with schools.

When it comes to the resources that circulate through social networks, a fairly narrow typology is often used in the field. An emphasis on social capital leads to a focus on forms of social support such as advice, financial assistance and mentoring (cf Saulnier and Rowland, 1985). We aim to learn more about what *ideas* regarding children's learning and development circulate through social networks and social spaces and what *kinds of resources* are distributed. We are interested in tangible as well as the immaterial resources and thus we are interested in the locality and mobility of these resources and not just of the people who make up the social network.

### **Actor Network Theory**

If we consider some of the practicalities of how people manage to circulate information through social networks, we quickly realise that simply knowing the identities of the players and the nature of their relationships is insufficient. Imagine a mother discovers her friend is pregnant and that this friend became a friend because the two women's husbands work together. Because the family only has one car and it is not easy to visit her friend soon, she gives her husband her favourite baby care guidebook to take to work and pass on to his workmate. The friend reads the book and next time the two talk on the phone, they discuss whether 'controlled crying' is a good method for settling babies.

If we used this example to address the question 'How does knowledge circulate?' then an answer that included only the human actors and their relations to each other would be insufficient. Actor Network Theory conceptualises networks as 'comprised of diverse materials' (Murdoch, 1998) including the human and the non-human. This approach is interested in tracing movements and connections between all elements that makes up networks (Law, 1999). With regard to our example above, ANT encourages the analyst to include the book, car, home, workplace and telephone as network elements along with the human actors. We could map the travels of the book as it was taken through space and passed from hand to hand. We could ask where this book object came from and retrospectively reproduce its travels prior to this point, perhaps from a national chain bookshop in a mall or flown in via airmail order from an overseas-based internet site.

ANT is particularly interested in how very similar ideas and practices can pass quickly between, or simultaneously occur at, points distant in space and even time (Smith, 2003). Clearly, developments in information communication technology have created fertile ground for this approach; however ANT theorists also apply their approach to historical studies. A key concept is the 'immutable mobile', an entity that is able to move through networks without changing its basic character; these can be material objects or practices (Latour, 1987). This idea allows us to consider *what* is moving through the networks which parents join, or into which they are enlisted, and to consider how ideas about parenting, and the goods/services associated with these ideas, are disseminated. For instance, we are aware from the pilot study that the practice of 'controlled crying' is promoted by health services, explicitly taught in parenting classes, described in books, magazines and pamphlets, passed on by word of mouth. Perhaps this could be a candidate for an 'immutable mobile'.

### **The Study**

*Parents' networks: the circulation of knowledge about children's literacy learning* is a three year international ARC Discovery Project which has just reached the end of its first year. The combined expertise of the team of four researchers covers education, literacy studies, anthropology and cultural studies. We have each over a number of years been studying the circulation of knowledge and practice through formal and informal sites of learning including community organisations, homes, schools, libraries, internet cafes, publishing companies and natural environments.

The study consists of three interconnected parts:

1. Ecological survey of three neighbourhood hubs;
2. Network mapping of focus families over time (10 per site);
3. Tracing knowledge through networks: organisational, local, national and global connections.

In this paper, we focus primarily on the ecological survey and network mapping elements.

### **The sites**

The three sites were selected to provide maximum diversity and potential for cross-case analysis at family, community, regional and national levels. Site 1, a rural community of two adjoining townships, is located on the fringe of the metropolitan area. This area has long been a settling place for migrants

wishing to establish market gardens owing to the fertility of the flood plains and includes one of the most significant Vietnamese communities in the state, as well as established Greek and Italian families now in their third generation. The community is set to expand owing to new housing developments just commencing.

Site 2 is the central hub and surrounding residential area of one of the largest metropolitan local government districts in South Australia. This district is predominantly Anglo-Australian with a significant minority of older residents of German and Polish extraction and a growing minority of new arrivals from Africa. While it is in the median on the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001), this masks a considerable disparity between the highest and lowest socio-economic areas. The central hub is a busy commercial and local government precinct with a very large covered mall on one side of a major highway and sporting/cultural facilities on the other.

Site 3, a US university town, is situated an hour outside of New York City. A site of high social contrast, the town is home to a highly educated elite and also a strong working-class black community who have historically lived and worked separately from the established majority upper-middle class whites. In the past 10 years, the town has experienced significant growth and change, owing to the arrival of Hispanic immigrants (primarily Guatemalan and Mexican), and now Spanish is the most common of the 55 languages, other than English, spoken in this diverse community.

### ***The ecological survey***

Taking our lead from the studies described previously (Good et al., 1997, Neuman and Celano, 2001) and incorporating an awareness of geosemiotics (Scollon and Scollon, 2003), we have developed a method for documenting and assessing the local environments for parents' resourcing and networking activities related to children's early learning and development. This ecological survey is currently being carried out in each of the three sites and will be repeated in the second year of the study. All major roads and all major undercover sites (such as malls) will be surveyed using a combination of walking and driving while documenting with digital video, audiotaped commentary, handwritten notes and artefact collection. Observation and documentation will be focused on the following categories:

- Characteristics of public spaces for parent networking and encountering CLD resources;
- Observable patterns of usage;
- Displays i.e. collections of materials on noticeboards, shop windows etc;
- Characteristics of information resources (eg. type, language, images, portability, location);
- Signage identifying services (eg. legibility, language, accuracy);
- Technologies for information provision (eg. computers, internet access points, headphones for listening to audio, URLs on printed materials).

Across all these categories, we will apply certain over-arching perspectives including *accessibility* (how easy is it to find/reach/see?), *context* (where is this text/display/shop and how does this relate to other contexts?) *cost* (how much time/money/effort does it take to get to this place/access this resource/take this thing home?), and *identity* (which kinds of people are explicitly or implicitly invited to read this text/come to this place?).

While systematic analysis is still to be done at the time of writing, we have conducted initial reconnaissance at each of the three sites. Some interesting early insights are emerging. Parenting resources appear in multiple forms and are found in a great diversity of places, many of these rarely given serious consideration in research, such as shop windows, doctors' waiting rooms and post offices. Some resources are ubiquitous such as, in South Australia, the magazine *Adelaide's Child*. Commercial entities are using parents' interest in their children's education to encourage consumer activity, with campaigns like Shop for Your School and Westfield Kids attempting to bring parents into commercial hubs. At the same time, institutional sites such as libraries are taking on some of the characteristics of commercial spaces to attract families, for instance by incorporating a café. Signage for new housing developments contains images of families consuming (holding shopping bags) and learning (reading, studying). Overall, in terms of identities, the consumer identity is strongly evoked

and is associated with being a parent and providing for one's children, including for one's child's educational achievement.

Access has already emerged as an issue, particularly we suspect for families where the care giving parent has no car. Our attempts to walk from, say mall to library, across a main road and through large busy car parks has highlighted the difficulty even without a pram and heavy bag. Language is another issue in access to information; most resources are in English only, particularly in commercial zones. However, in all three sites there are neighbourhoods or localised places (such as particular shops) which obviously serve cultural minorities and where information is available in languages other than English.

### ***Network mapping of families***

Ten families from each site (30 in all) will participate. The choice of sites will facilitate a diverse sample including rural fringe and urban families; additionally we will strategically recruit in order to ensure the inclusion of: fathers, both residential and (if possible) non-residential; parents/caregivers of a child with a disability, chronic illness, developmental delay or learning difficulty; non-English speaking background parents/caregivers; single-parent families.

In the Australian sites, the network mapping will have a longitudinal dimension: families' knowledge networks will mapped at two points: when the eldest child is 3 years old, and when the eldest child is 5 years old. The choice of the first time points allows us to access parents when their memories of the infancy period are still relatively clear. The second point allows us to gauge the impact of school entry on families' knowledge networks. The involvement of the US site in the longitudinal aspect of the study is subject to a funding application by the PI.

Home visits with interviews, visual documentation and artefact collection will be used to investigate:

- Priorities for children's learning and development, including any special needs;
- Resources sought and gathered and the forms these take eg books, magazines, educational toys, bookmarked web-sites;
- Places where resources were sourced and method of accessing these places;
- Social networking in relation to CLD information and resources;
- Practices associated with these resources e.g. play, reading, behaviour management, health care, diagnosis;
- How parents manage their economic resources in relation to knowledge resources, eg what do they decide to buy rather than borrow and why?

This method was trialled in the pilot study which included home visits with nine parents. Below we report on one of the case studies from the pilot study to illustrate how we are working across spatial, social and textual dimensions to better understand the ways in which all these impact on the resourcing of parents in different circumstances.

### **Neighbourhood affordances, social networks and the circulation of resources: An illustrative case**

At the time of writing, the most detailed analysis had been done on data from a preceding 12 month pilot study. This study enabled us to trial methods and develop a rationale for the design of the larger project currently underway. The pilot study consisted of the following elements:

- Visual and artefact documentation of a neighbourhood site including a library and community centre;
- Interviews with community workers (centre director and family support worker);
- Survey of parents' information seeking and sharing;
- Home visits to 9 parents (6 mothers and 3 fathers) including interviews and artefact collection.

In this illustrative case study of 'Paula', we have used interviews, artefacts and mapping to develop an account of one parent's network profile and networking activities as they related to her resources for supporting her child's learning and development.

To analyse this data we inventoried all resources mentioned in the interview, listed and categorised all people, places and web-sites mentioned as sources of materials, and used Google Map to locate places and note their usage. We also conducted a textual analysis of the interview transcript focusing on priorities for children's learning and development, values associated with resources and their sources, and networking activities. Out of this analysis we developed three over-arching case themes reflecting the informant's priorities and activities:

- Child's life cycle;
- Bringing up the global citizen;
- Travelling around the 'villages'.

Briefly, the theme of the child's life cycle related to the importance placed on different kinds of resources at different stages. Indeed Paula explicitly organised her account in these terms, stating 'We might go chronologically as far as the child's age,' and began by talking about the books she had read while pregnant. However, for this paper, we focus on the themes of bringing up the global citizen and travelling round the 'villages' as these were most closely related to issues of space and place.

### ***Introducing Paula in place***

Paula is a scientist currently working towards her PhD and the mother of a son aged two and a half. She and her partner, also a scientist, live in an inner urban neighbourhood popular amongst young professionals and students including international visitors on study visas. This neighbourhood is one of a number of urban centres sometimes referred to as 'villages' dotted in an arc running from the south-west to the east of the city of Adelaide. The designation 'village' in this urban context indicates a centre that in the early years of colonisation was a self-contained settlement often a staging post for travellers. These 'villages' were generally given English sounding names and became the site of early suburban subdivisions. These days, when urban infill has joined all the villages into one metropolis, they are known for their architectural 'character' and the convenience of a concentration of facilities such as schools, shops and churches into one locale. As we will see, Paula knew her way around the villages and together they could be considered to form a spatial network around which she travelled to access a range of resources.

### ***Bringing up the global citizen***

Paula's parenting values and search for resources were strongly influenced by a specific project. She and her partner, both native English speakers, had decided to raise their child as multilingual in three languages – one European and one Asian language in addition to the mother tongue. The internationalisation of their professional field of science was a major factor in this decision in two ways. It created the possibility that the family would one day live and work in another country and it also enabled them to create social networks with colleagues from other places. That some of these colleagues were also parents meant that Paula has seen other children brought up with English as a second language. She mentions all these factors in the following excerpt:

The uni where we're based is very multicultural with lots of international scientists, so talking about bilingualism, I've also looked at other people who are doing it in a more real sense, because the mother tongue that you would naturally speak to your child in is not English [ ... ] And I would like to make it real by spending time in those countries.

Paula's university workplace was a crucial node in her network. Its location on the city's 'cultural strip', adjacent to the art gallery, library and theatres put her in the vicinity of many resources such as information about children's literature and art activities. The university also ran a child care centre which was unusually active in informing and resourcing parents. Paula had been successful in getting her personal project of raising a multilingual child onto the centre's agenda. She was coordinating a working group and hoped to see the centre adopt a bilingual approach as a result.

Paula also drew on family and friendship networks in support of her project. She asked her father, a retired language teacher currently living interstate, to research bilingual education on the internet. As a result he discovered the local (to Paula) branch of the Japan-Australia association. As it happened, the association ran a weekly playgroup in a nearby suburb which Paula began attending with her son.

This example of networking shows that the interpenetration of face-to-face and digital, local and global networks was a feature of Paula's situation. Her ability to smoothly switch between domains was a considerable advantage in progressing her project of bringing up her son as a global citizen.

### ***Travelling around the 'villages'***

As Paula described her search for information and resources in the interview, she made many specific references to various places and to what she had found at each. These places included community centres, libraries, bookshops, toyshops, playgroups and the child care centre. Within these places, Paula often specified particular sub-locations where resources could be found such as the parent book-shelf in the child care centre or the table in the university cafeteria where pamphlets were often left.

To get a better sense of Paula's movements through space, we recorded each location she mentioned on Google Map. What emerged indicated a pattern of movement between her home neighbourhood Goodwood, her workplace in the city centre, and three other urban 'villages' – Unley, Mitcham and Norwood.

**Table 1: Locations and providers of resources collected by Paula.**

Location	library	bookshop	toyshop	Other facility
Goodwood (home base)	✓			playgroups
Unley	✓	✓	✓	
Mitcham		✓		
Norwood	✓		✓	
City centre (workplace)		✓		Art gallery Theatres

As Table 1 indicates, each of these locations contained at least one of the three kinds of providers most valued by Paula in resourcing herself as a parent – libraries, bookshops and toy shops. Additionally, the suburbs adjacent to her home neighbourhood happened to be the location of the multicultural (French and Japanese) playgroups Paula attended.

Her spatial network also contained 'no-go' zones. In contrast to some of the other parents we studied, Paula did not mention shopping in any of the large undercover malls in what used to be the outer suburbs of Adelaide (now considered middle ring). Indeed she stated she had 'never set foot inside' two of the warehouse-type chain toy shops found in these malls, Toys "R" Us or Toyworld, since she was 'looking for something more educational.'

Given her considerable commitment to her furthering her child's learning and development (particularly in relation to languages) Paula would probably have been willing to travel quite some distance to locate resources. However, she did not have to. The 'villages' were not far apart and all of them were fairly close to the city centre. Indeed all these information and resources points were available within a radius of about five kilometres. Paula's locality in the village zone gave her privileged access to both material resources and social networks of the kind which could be used to support her child's learning and development.

### **Conclusion**

The combination of ecological survey, geosemiotics and network analysis has expanded our research repertoire for investigating the question of how society resources parents in their task of raising their children as educated and educable. We are in the process of analysing how the various elements – the spatial, material and social nature of neighbourhoods, the parents' priorities and personal resources, and the kinds of ideas about CLD that are being promoted and associated with goods and services – interact to produce patterns of opportunity. The pilot study has confirmed that parents go into a range of places in their local neighbourhoods and further afield, arrange for resources to come to their homes from elsewhere, access social networks, consult professionals, and search cyberspace in their attempts to find information and resources, with varying success. We are finding that different neighbourhoods offer different affordances for parents and that within a community, sub-groups also access different resources. Issues of accessibility, cost and identification are all significant. As the project continues, we aim to undertake more comparative analysis across the three sites and within sites to better understand what are emerging as complex disparities in the opportunities available to families.

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