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**PLANS AND
SITUATED
ACTIONS**

The problem of

**human machine
communication**

LEARNING IN DOING: SOCIAL, COGNITIVE, AND COMPUTATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

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How do we design interfaces that support complex activities with multiple variations and options (eg, copying machine)?

Previous work (prior to 1985) on interface design mostly assumed that human action is based on **making and following PLANS**.

Question: do humans seem to **follow plans** – and if not, what are the implications for the design of complex interfaces (eg, menu systems on copying machines)

- Observational study of people using existing Xerox copiers.
- Documentation of problems, confusions, expectations, and the like
- Correlate confusions/problems with different sequences of operations (and states) of the copying machine and its interface.



Analysis of the data suggests that:

- 1 people “**improvise**” (“situated action”) rather than “follow plans”, and
- 2 the existing interfaces create more confusion than necessary because they do not take this into account.

Argues for a new model of human action (“situated action”) – and a different approach to HCI design (based on situated action)

Thank you.