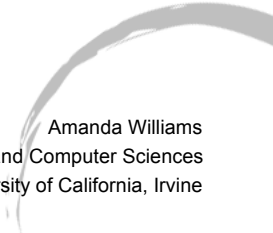




Thais that bind:

global mobilities, cell phones and collaboration

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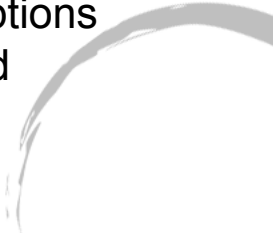


where I'm coming from

- ubicomp and interaction design
 - qualitative, ethnographic
- 

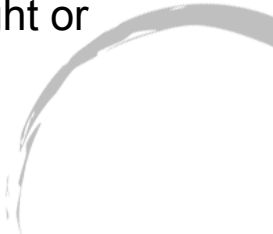


why?

- “computing everywhere” includes in developing countries...
 - ... which are more than just “emerging markets.”
 - can reveal our implicit assumptions about technology, its uses and appropriation.
- 

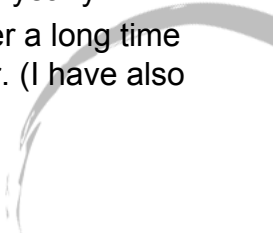


what?

- Multi-sited ethnographic study of transnational Thai retirees.
 - Semi-structured ethnographic interviews.
 - Visited homes, stayed overnight or multiple days when possible.
- 




who?

- 19 Thai transnational retirees. 4 of their children.
 - 30 + years in the US. Had careers and raised children here. Children are now adults and parents are ready to retire.
 - Returned to Thailand permanently, or own a home in each country and migrate approximately yearly.
 - Most participants have known each other a long time and worked or attended temple together. (I have also know some of them for a long time.)
- 



where?

- Seattle, St. Louis, New York, Bangkok, Chantaburi.
 - and, notably, a lot of those city's suburbs and satellite towns.
- 



major themes

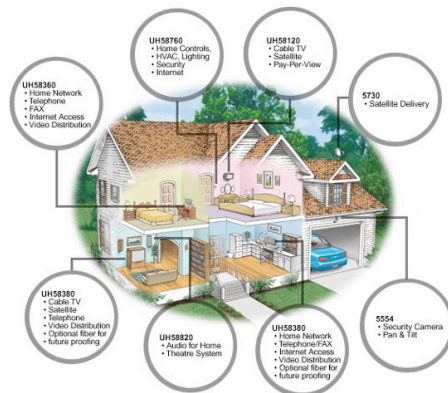
- the distributed home
- anchored mobility
- mobile objects and infrastructural places



the distributed home

technology in the home

- concern with house as built structure
- house as kin (Lévi-Strauss 1949)



Me: so who all lives here?

Jo: My mom, my dad, and me. Um...

and then a rotating cast of characters.

Like, aunts, uncles. My grandmother

who just passed away was here as

well, so there was always some relative staying here because she was

immobile from the waist down. And

then in September, everyone's going to be going back and I'll be the only one

living here.

practices of distributed homes

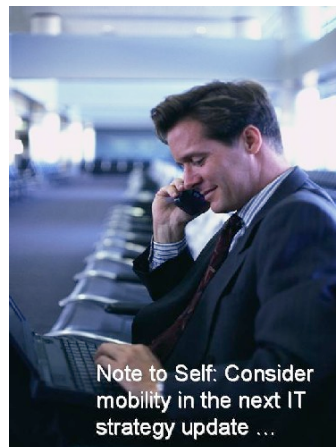
- exchange
 - during retirement, responsibilities don't go away, they shift.
- degrees of "hominess"
 - home as a network of homelike places



anchored mobility

mobile technologies

- uprootedness
- anytime-anywhere



spatial anchoring

“she [my older sister] doesn't have any son. and i come from a big family, so i stay with her since i was, maybe 3, 4 years old, i started kindergarten, and i stay with her until i graduate from high school.”

“so i spend at most 4 5 years around here, the first 4 5 years here. and then i move to chantaburi. and so move to bangkok. and then the states. so i don't know too much about the people here. but they know me from my parents.”

spatial anchoring

“yeah we had a ton of people staying at my house, i think at one time i counted maybe we had like at least, overall at least 11 or 12 different people living at my house. i mean cuz there's like my parents, and then me, and my three siblings and then like, two cousins from one family, two cousins from another family, another two... so... then like, three or four random ones i guess, so that's more like 15... different people before i graduated high school that were living in the same house.”

mobile objects and
infrastructural places



seams and scars



- Me: so you have one [a cell phone] here?
- Nhu: Over here, you have to have it. The traffic like this, you can't.... It's difficult. Over there you don't have to have a cell phone. Over here you have to.
- Me: what do you use it for?
- Nhu: Everything. If I forgot something. Or I call you... where are you? I need help for the directions! And when you get shopping.

- Me: what about a cell phone?
- Tui: in Thailand, in Thailand, even young people [children] cannot live without cell phone.
- Ae: 5 years old, 7 years old.
- Ae: They use sometimes when they go to school, when they get out they call their mom on the phone, to pick them up.
- Tui: Over here, they use cell phones [*forcefully*] a. lot.
- Ae: They use...
- Tui: When you live in [this] city, you cannot live without [a] cell phone.
- Ae: And they use for everything.
- Tui: Because, you know why? [*forcefully*] Because [of] the traffic.

- Tui: [leans forward] I love America. Because... number one is Freedom. But it's freedom by the Law. When the law says, you got to do. It... conforms [the] American heart, when they do something. Like... example.
- Ae: And they respect, you know, the people respect the law, over there.
- Tui: Example, right, when you drive the car. You don't go all over like that...like everybody do. And the cops! They ignore [it] over here.

conclusions?

- ICTs here are used not just against a background of cultural context...
- they are used as a part of the production of culture.

thanks.

I owe a drink to: everyone in PaPR, especially Ken Anderson and Dawn Nafus. Johanna Brewer, who thought up the title. Paul Dourish. All my participants, who were incredibly generous. My mom, without whom I would have had about 2 participants total. And you guys.

questions?