CSCW in the Home

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Why studying CSCW in the home?

- The home presents a difficult set of challenges for innovative design, challenges that contrast with many of the problems faced in designing for the work place.
- The home incorporates many different motivations and practices that cannot be simply optimized through technological support.
- Actions are not always purposeful, sometimes fleeting and regularly bound up with the unremarkable aspects of home making.
CSCW in the home

- In setting an agenda for systems design in the home, O’Brien and Rodden (1997) give early emphasis to this:

The home is at different times a place of escape, a place of work, a place of privacy and a place of public exhibition of the tastes and values of the householders living there. (p. 257)
CSCW in the home

- The coordination of activities in the home are not merely, then, about getting somewhere, finishing this, or sharing that; they are also about making a house feel like home.
CSCW in the home

- Others are focusing on mismatches
  - between professional and ordinary user expectations (Bly et al. 2006),
  - congruence and divergence
  - between professionals and ordinary users (Brush 2006),
- and on improving understanding of how users ordinarily orient to complexity.
Case Studies and Issues
Making IT work

- Unpacking and installing a new computer, installing a home network (Bowers, 2003)
- Configuring network connections, wi fi
- Sharing resources (printer, loudspeakers)
Managing photographs

- Huge archives accumulated in homes;
- Paper and digital photos;
- Sharing, storing, making copies, printing;
- Transactive knowledge – who can do what best?
Managing family repositories

- Managing the home library
- Managing home appliances (washing machine, cooker) and warranty
- Managing the family genealogical tree
- Managing joint schedules
- Shopping lists
Home automation

- Homes tweeting their own energy consumption
- Security and alarm installations
- Solar powered batteries, sensors
- DIY communities – building own houses, furniture etc
Home crafts

- Hobbies such as knitting, sewing, origami, gardening, cooking – supported by online communities, Twitter, blogging, Facebook groups, forums
- Selling products on eBay, etsy
- Advertising via email
Family Communication & Coordination

- Mobile phones – the most frequent modality
- Landline still playing a role
- Black or white boards in the house
- Calendars
- Post-its

The Whereabouts Clock - Sellen 2006
Artefacts for the Home

- The Whereabouts Clock
- Teapot Cosy
- The wi fi Kettle
- The Drift Table (Gaver 2007)
Work-life boundary issues

- Home care for the elderly
- Independent living
- Being always on – checking work emails while watching a movie
- Flexible work schedules and work locations
Music Sharing

- Music streaming - Spotify, Pandora, LastFM
- Music sharing via bluetooth, wifi, NFC


- Barry Brown, Abigail J. Sellen and Erik Geelhoed Music Sharing as a Computer Supported Collaborative Application, ECSCW01