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Framing ubiquitous communication
through design practice and discourse

Interaction, co-presence and infrastructures
in ubiquitous computing systems

The talk focuses on the technological mediation of mobility, addressing the dimension of ubiquitous communication as envisioned by designers of advanced computing systems, defined as 'ubiquitous', sometimes 'pervasive' and, of course, mobile.

My central hypothesis argues that mobility depends on sociotechnical processes which make artefacts more and more convergent, multi-functional and either pocketable (e.g. smart phones) or distributed in the environment.

Ubiquity as aspiration to omnipresence is embedded into discourses and artefacts supposed to be mobile and accessible anywhere anytime (at least in principle). The myth of ubiquitous computing as invisible, unobtrusive infrastructure embedded into material surfaces founds a prolific literature. Moreover, it is exemplary of a trend to imagine and design contexts of interaction, both public and private, where materiality of technology is redefined.

Ubiquitous communication, therefore, is the result of vast discourses circulating in the public sphere, as well as of practices and discourses performed by specific social groups (e.g. designers).

Results of in progress interviews with researchers in the field of ubiquitous computing and advanced embedded systems will be reported in the talk.