

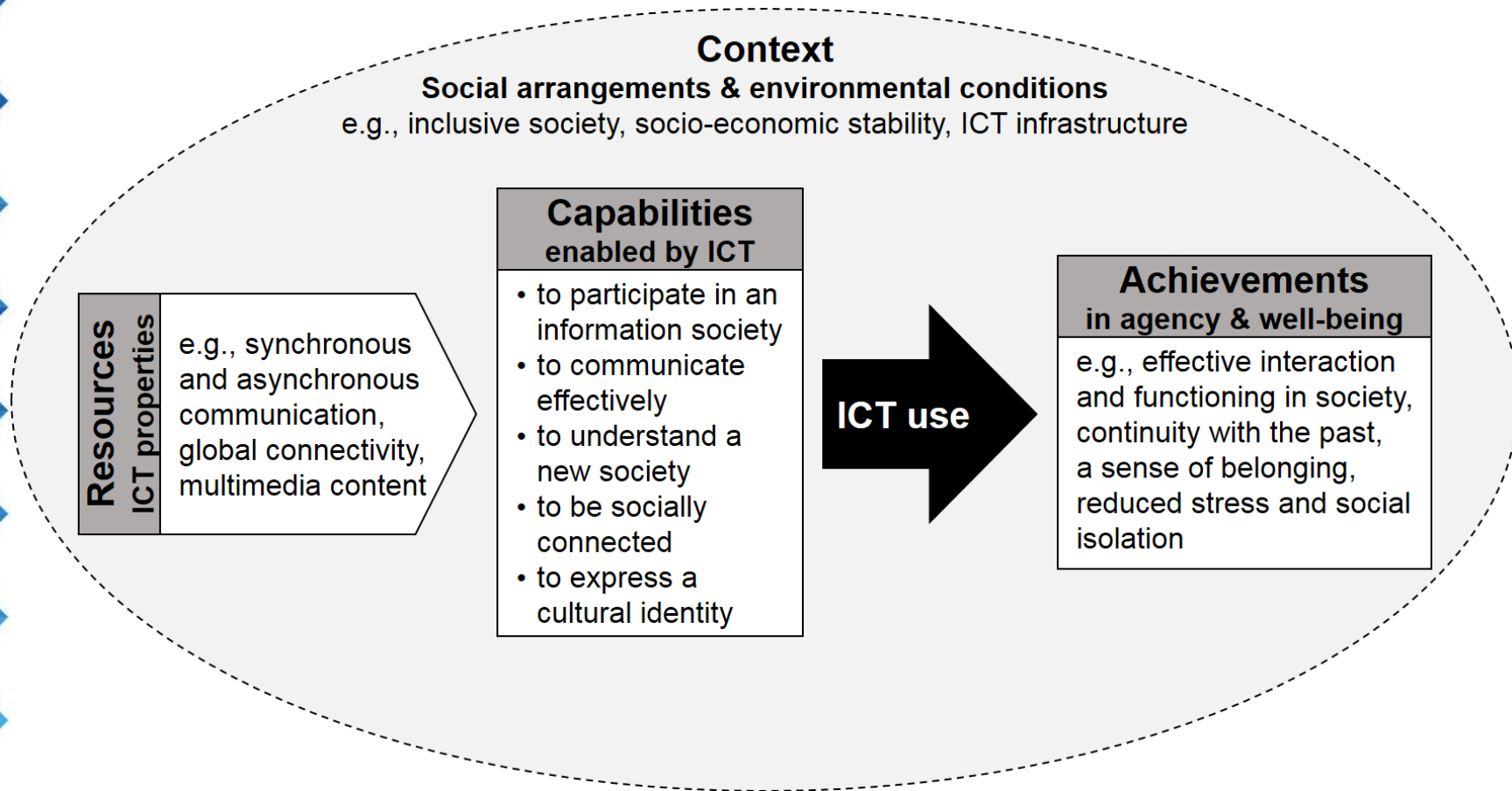
# Technology-mediated information and communication practices of refugees

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# Motivation

- How ICT contributes to the social inclusion of refugees (Díaz Andrade & Doolin, 2016)





# Research question

How do refugees exercise agency in enacting technology-mediated information and communication practices?

1. Information and communication practices
2. Human agency and technology enactment

# Information and communication practices

- “The ways people seek, use, and share information in everyday contexts” (Savolainen, 2008, p. vi)
- “Communication is the sharing of meaning through the exchange of information” (Castells, 2009, p. 54)

1. *Orienting practices* (Savolainen, 2008)

Monitoring information about everyday events or with which to orient oneself to a new or unfamiliar environment

2. *Instrumental practices* (Savolainen, 2008)

Actively seeking and using information to make sense of a problematic situation, solve a problem or perform a task

3. *Expressive practices* (Caidi et al., 2010)

Social and communicative dimensions of everyday information practices, particularly the sharing of information



# Human agency and technology enactment

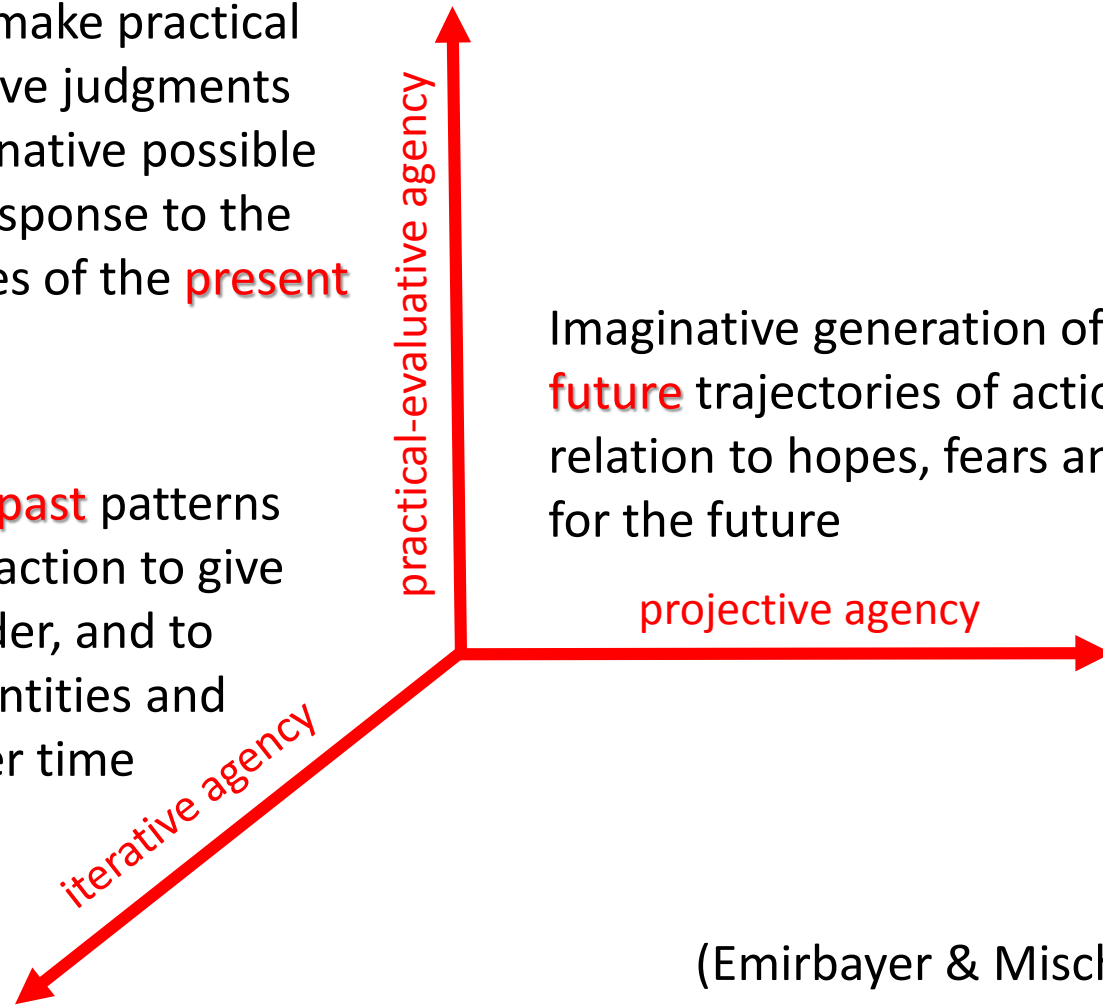
- As human actors, we assess how ICT affords possibilities for action that can help us address our needs and achieve our goals
- This process occurs within specific temporal, relational and historical conditions that we inhabit, and which enable and constrain human action
- Human agency has a temporal dimension – in acting, we can assume different simultaneous agentic orientations – to the past, the future, and the present (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998)
- Which of these forms the primary orientation depends on the emergent situation in which action is occurring

# Three temporal agentic orientations

Capacity to make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible actions in response to the contingencies of the **present**

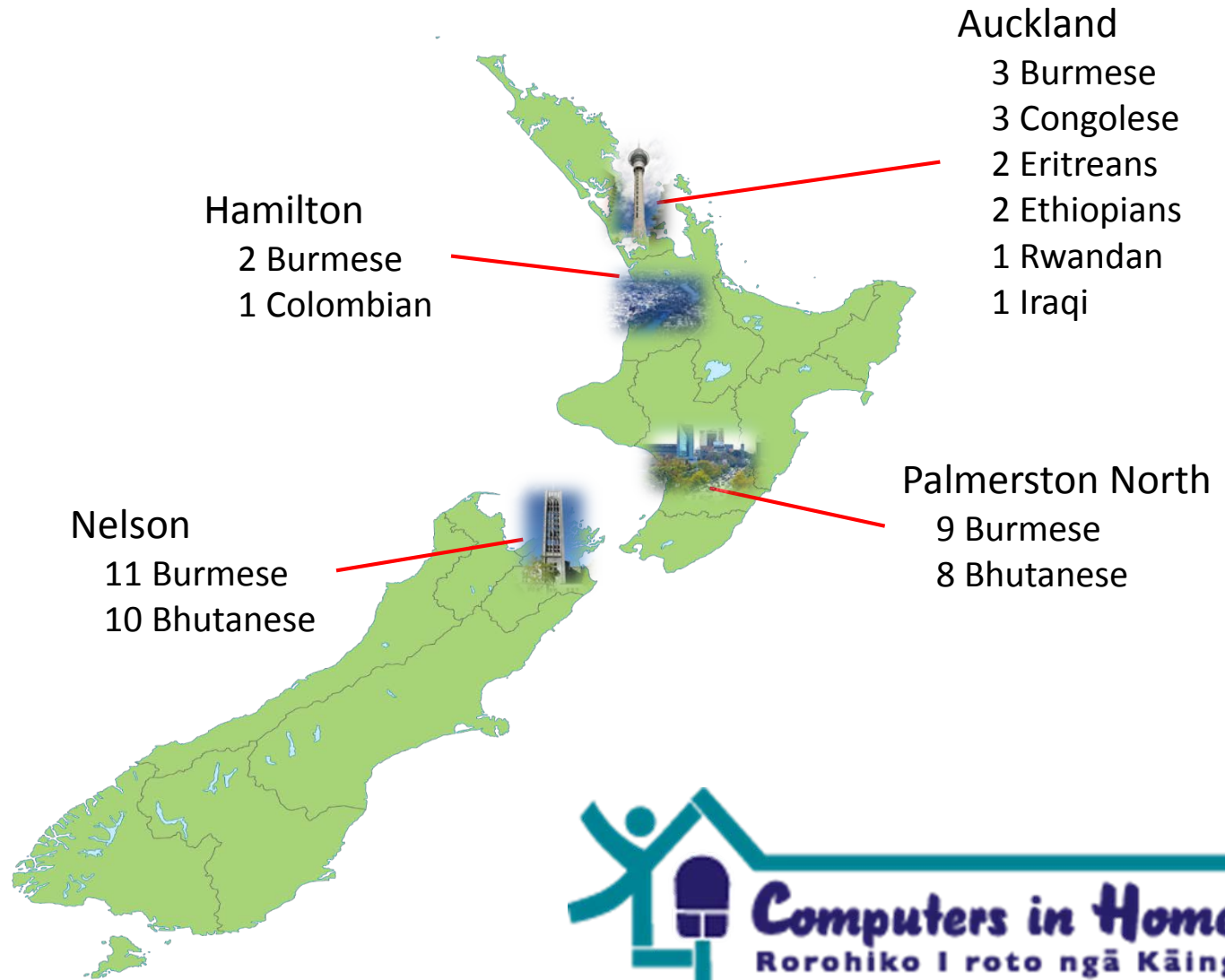
Reactivation of **past** patterns of thought and action to give stability and order, and to help sustain identities and interactions over time

Imaginative generation of possible **future** trajectories of action in relation to hopes, fears and desires for the future



(Emirbayer & Mische, 1998)

# Data collection



# Method

1. *Critical case* – refugees' technology-mediated information and communication practices take place at the juncture between past experiences and future prospects, where they have to act upon presently evolving events
2. Initial *thematic analysis* to identify emergent patterns technology-mediated information and communication practices – i.e., orienting, instrumental and expressive
3. Reported practices were then *mapped* against their temporal agentic orientations – i.e., past, present and future



We have a ...  
organises the ...  
do for our ...  
because it ...  
hard to get ...  
... We ...

“My parents have got  
Internet ... The website  
[supports video-chat,  
so] we can talk  
and we can chat ... I am  
... to see them on

“These Māori people... We  
are new to here, so it is  
hard for us ... We go and  
search [on the Internet] to  
understand their culture”

*Armand*

“I would like to write  
something about my  
family story ... If I were  
good at computers, I could  
create a website ... Maybe  
my son can do it ... So in  
the future, my grandson or  
granddaughter can read  
about it” *Zaw*

... ar ... tions and  
support networks

environment

Act

“I go to Google Maps and  
look at the place where I  
was born ... I can see a  
photo ... My village has  
changed a lot. Someone  
cut the forest ... I am very  
sad” *Maung*

thno-

because ...  
unemployed ...” *Ganesh*

Developing  
capabilities now to  
enhance future life

Expressing cultural  
identity for future  
generations

... ally useful  
in the future

# Conclusion

We draw attention to how refugees as ICT users enact technology-mediated information and communication practices that enable them to:

- **Manage the present** → utilise ICT to address current dilemmas and contingencies, and minimise the uncertainties of the unfamiliar information environment that they have to navigate
- **Look to the past** → actions are focused on reinforcing past connections and reaffirming and upholding cultural identities
- **Envision the future** → engagement with ICT frames future expectations and aspirations, and is directed at preparing for anticipated events and situations

# Implications

1. Interventions for the social inclusion of individuals based on ICT provision need to have a central concern with the agency of those to be included
2. Social inclusion in an information society needs to encompass the ICT-enabled capabilities that such individuals value in constructing meaningful lives
3. ICT facilitates the maintenance of transnational connections and identities that matter to individuals – refugees' lives are not restricted to the local context of resettlement
4. The social inclusion of displaced people such as refugees is more than an information problem – it involves communicative and expressive activities that repair disrupted social and cultural lives

# References

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