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EVERYDAY PRODUCT, EVERYDAY LIVES: REFLECTIONS ON THE MEANINGS OF THE ELECTRONIC RICE COOKER IN EVERDAY THAI SOCIAL PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

This paper will explore the relationship between design and everyday life by considering fifty-five Thai people's stories about a ubiquitous domestic product, the electronic rice cooker. Since its invention in the 1950s, the electronic rice cooker has changed the way in which the vast majority of Thai people cook rice. Notably, complicated and time-consuming traditional processes have been replaced by the much more convenient automatic switch. With the arrival of the new generation of computerized and multifunctional rice cookers, the onward march of technology would, at first sight, seem ready to progress well into its next chapter. However, our findings uncover meanings and voices about social practices that occur in everyday life but are rarely heard or attended to; voices and stories that may, otherwise, be lost forever. Studying a mundane object from the perspective of everyday life allows us to bring to light the role and meanings of design objects which go beyond their use or exchange value. The changes that design brings are not limited to product form or process of use, but also to the ways in which one perceives one's self, one's society and one's world.