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Sustainability, Invention and Energy Demand Reduction: Co-designing Communities and Practice

Team Members

Professor Mike Michael: Principal Investigator
 Dr. Jennifer Gabrys: Co-Investigator
 Professor Bill Gaver: Co-Investigator
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 Design Research Assistant
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Aims and Objectives

The project investigates the co-design of energy demand reduction technologies and communities of practice. Using methods from design, sociology and science and technology studies, the research explores how affect, ambiguity and aesthetics as well as functionality might enable communities to take creative ownership of technologies and systems of energy demand reduction (what we call 'sustainability invention').

Methods

The project entails a three-stage formative research process. At each stage, coupled longer-term engagement phases and participant events will be used to create and research an increasingly large and diverse community of practice and to develop relevant technological prototypes for energy demand reduction.

The aim is to engender creative discussion and debate around matters of trust, responsibility and community ownership of energy demand reduction.

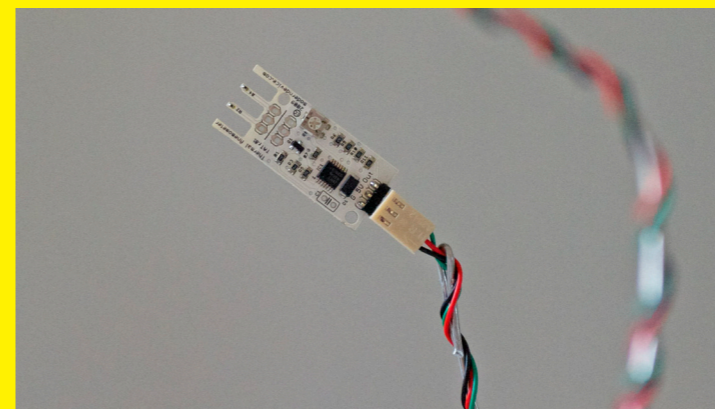
Stage One

We will engage with relevant communities to investigate strategies for energy-demand reduction and to recruit volunteers for a newly-formed community around the project.



Stage Two

The team will design, batch-produce and implement speculative technological prototypes. These (playful, ambiguous and evocative, as well as instrumental) prototypes will be introduced to the volunteer community as part of a large-scale, extended field trial.



Stage Three

Regular ethnographic engagement with this community will record volunteers' complex views on the prototypes and their impact on emerging technical and social practices related to energy demand reduction. The results, along with other materials will be presented to a broader public in a launch event and exhibition. The aim is to engender creative discussion and debate around matters of trust, responsibility and community ownership of energy demand reduction.



What help, information, advice, support etc. would you most appreciate from colleagues?

Advice on contacts, literature and initiatives.
 Suggestions for existing energy communities who might like to be involved.

Challenges...

Recruiting volunteers/producing community.
 Ensuring complexity of prototypes.

...and opportunities

Developing interdisciplinary synergies.

Your biggest problems?

Recruiting into a very particular design role.

What can you offer others?

New perspective/methodology/problematique on community of practice and technology.

What is the most exciting part of the project?

Chronic contingencies associated with speculative design.

What scares the team the most?

Chronic contingencies associated with speculative design.