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Design

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Local Barometer (Overview)

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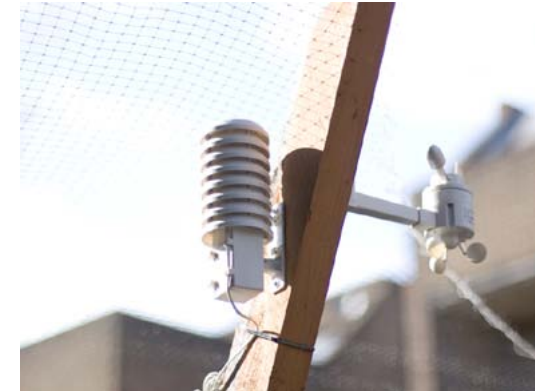
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Local Barometer



In London, nearby neighbourhoods can play home to strongly contrasting ethnic and economic communities. The Local Barometer reveals the socio-cultural texture around the home by displaying locally produced online information depending on local weather conditions. A weather station mounted outside the home controls web-scraping software to collect fragments of images and text – currently drawn from the loot.com classified ad site – that originate upwind from the home. This content is displayed on a series of small display devices designed to be appropriate for various locations in the home: an upright structure for the mantelpiece, an L-shaped structure that hangs over the edge of a bookshelf, another that hangs on a rail in the kitchen and one that protrudes from an electrical wall-socket. The effect is that succinct content evocative of local detail is blown by the wind through the home.

content by linking it to the home's physical location. Further examples of Threshold Devices include the 'Drift Table', the 'Plane Tracker' and the 'Video Window'.



The anemometer mounted outside Phil's home.



We gave the Local Barometer to a volunteer, Phil, who lived in a small one-bedroom apartment in Camden, North London, which he shared with his wife and two cats. Phil was in his forties and had lived in London all his life, mostly in Camden. During his time with the Local Barometer, Phil made connections between the content he saw on the devices and his rich knowledge of the local area, developing impassioned conceptual and emotional attachments to certain items whilst expressing distrust and critical engagement at others.



Phil describing his use of the Local Barometer.

Threshold Devices

The Local Barometer is an example of a 'threshold device': an interactive artefact that present information gathered from the home's surroundings to give new views on domestic circumstances. A focus on the home and its surroundings complements more traditional applications for domestic computing. Whereas conventional systems for the home focus on bringing placeless and generic content into the home, Threshold devices, in contrast, particularise

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