

Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

Torino, 10th - 11th - 12th July 2008

Organised by Co-ordination of Italian Design Research Doctorates with
Conference of Italian Design Faculty Deans and Programme Heads.

In the framework of WORLD DESIGN CAPITAL TORINO 2008 | © ICSID
An ICSID initiative of the IDA.

**Sangiorgi, Daniela, Hemment, Drew, Büscher, Monika [d.sangiorgi@lancaster.ac.uk;
d.hemment@lancaster.ac.uk; m.buscher@lancaster.ac.uk]
Lancaster University, ImaginationLancaster, UK**

EVERYDAY IMAGINATION, PRACTICES, SYSTEMS

Designing with people for systemic change

Abstract

Designing for a sustainable future poses many challenges. There is, on the one hand, a need to be bold; to imagine and 'design' new systems that enable more sustainable lifestyles. On the other, sustainability depends on unpredictable changes in people's daily life practices as well as on how they adapt to, and adopt, new system possibilities (Halpern et al., 2004).

Control may seem possible through education, incentivisation, coercion, (social) engineering and design, but historical studies of systemic change (e.g. Mosley 2001 on air pollution, Worpole 2000 on architecture) show that while these approaches may play a valuable part, if education, engineering, policy or design are 'done *to* people, not *with* them' (Worpole 2000, p. 68), they fail.

Yet endeavours to design with people face a catch 22. The emergence of new practices happens as part of doing things differently and it requires exposure to the new 'system', which is the object of design (Büscher 2005). A critical mass of component technologies, policies, services, infrastructures, etc. must be implemented, not just as scenarios but in some way 'for real', e.g. through prototypes. Yet, to design prototypes effectively, designers need a sense of future practices.

In our recently begun collaboration we bring together methodologies from service design, ethnographically informed participatory technology design and the arts. Projects under development include the 'design' of alternative urban mobility systems, the localization of production-reuse-redesign service systems, and an 'urban climate hack' that can enhance adaptation. We argue that our methodologies can be fruitfully combined to draw people in and 'change the change'. We aim to leverage the fact people are already inventing DIY sustainable solutions (Meroni, 2007; Willis et al., 2007), and to study, encourage and design for such (and further) emergent future practices, by combining:

1. A Service Design methodology to develop and visualize future service solutions working on three main interrelated levels - context, technology and users - and moving back and forward from the analysis and design within real contexts with users to the visualisation and co-design of abstract future scenarios (Meroni et al., 2007);
2. A design orientation towards 'co-realization' (Hartwood et al. 2002) and two methods to achieve far future oriented change: 'Future laboratories' and 'bricolage'. Future laboratories either bring the real world into the laboratory or take the laboratory into the field. Placing an emphasis on realism, collaboration and experimentation, future laboratories assemble components of the future (e.g. functional prototypes of technologies). They enable people to colonize new socio-technical futures and to explore and shape new practices. 'Bricolage' seeks to fold future technologies productively into real world work (Büscher et al. 2007, 2008).

Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

3. An interdisciplinary art practice that intervenes in the way cultural or technological processes shape society, and that aims to be transformational. It escapes the bounds of realism, not through flights of fancy, but through critical imagination and rupture. Such creative practice 'hacks' into different social, professional, technological and institutional situations, often acting as an intermediary or 'strange connector,' linking things in unexpected ways, or linking things one would not expect to be linked.

The synergy between these different methods overcomes individual limitations and amplifies the benefits of each. For example, co-realization depends on realism and is, therefore, costly. It can suffer from path-dependency, where investments made into one solution influence the allocation of future efforts. Moreover, while these approaches score high on 'designing *with* people', it can be difficult to shape bold visions when immersed in the detail of everyday practice. These limitations can be overcome by introducing methods from service design and art. Design of service scenarios, for example, provides 'systemic' visions of future solutions based on existing needs and trends. It, in turn, benefits from combination with more experimental methods through being able to ground visions more clearly in emergent practices. Art transcends the confines of future visions through critical reflection on the tensions between the kinds of futures we actually want and those we may be creating, and enabling people to colonize these futures experimentally, playfully, critically.

The full paper will describe, through the presentation of experiences from completed projects as well as an outline of three planned collaborative research projects, how the three methodologies can come together productively to change the change.

References

Büscher M. (2005) Social life under the microscope? Sociological Research Online. Volume 10, Issue 1. <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/10/1/buscher.html>.

Büscher M., Kristensen, M. Mogensen, P. (2007). Making the future palpable: Notes from a major incident Future Laboratory. *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Information Systems for Crisis Response and Management (ISCRAM)* May 13th-16th 2007 Delft, The Netherlands. Revised and reprinted in *International Journal for Emergency Management* (forthcoming 2008).

Büscher M., Kristensen, M. Mogensen, P. (submitted). Putting trust and distrust in IT: Supporting virtual emergency teamwork. *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Information Systems for Crisis Response and Management (ISCRAM)* May 4th to 7th, 2008, Washington, D.C., USA

Halpern D., Bates C., Mulgan G. and S. Aldridge (2004). Personal Responsibility and Changing Behaviour: the state of knowledge and its implications for public policy, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit.

Hartwood M., Procter R., Slack R, Voß A., Büscher M., Rouncefield, M. and Rouchy, P. (2002) Co-realisation: Towards a principled synthesis of ethnomethodology and participatory design. *Scandinavian Journal of Information Systems*, Vol. 14 (2), pp 9-30.

Meroni A. (ed.) (2007). *Creative Communities. People inventing sustainable ways of living*. Edizioni Polidesign, Milan (also from www.sustainable-everyday.net with Creative Commons licence)

Meroni, A., Sangiorgi D. and Simeone G. (2007). Intelligent Mobility System Sector Scenarios: service design to foster sustainable mobility within urban areas, Emergence Conference, Pittsburgh, September.

Mosley, S. (2001). *The Chimney of the World*. Ashgate.

Willis, R., Webb M. and J. Wilsdon (2007). *The Disrupters. Lessons for low-carbon innovation from the new wave of environmental pioneers*, Nesta research report.

Worpole, K. (2000) *Here comes the sun. Architecture and public space in twentieth-century European culture*. Reaktion Books.

Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability
