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Project "Stimulate green awareness" 2009
Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music, Nagoya
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Introduction

Topics like ecology and sustainability are of major importance and deserve public attention these days. If we believe in predictions made by renowned scientists, we only have a limited amount of time before we reach a stage of ecological collapse.

How can design help us to create a better awareness of changes in climate or environmental conditions especially in conurbations?
How "green" are our cities?
How "green" is our lifestyle and our behaviour seen in the context of the effects on the global ecosystem? (How does our current lifestyle and behaviour affect the earth we live in?)

Which tools like media, interfaces or products will help us to educate or stimulate customers and develop their awareness for ecological topics?
How can digital networks and the mass of information on ecological issues witch they provide also be used to the same ends – develop ecological awareness?

Ultimate goal:
"Stimulate green awareness"

Subordinate goals:
What (object):
"Indicator" (widget) to display the physical condition of the immediate space around us.

The "Indicator" is also useful not only to display information but also to serve as a measuring point, collecting recordable data from the immediate surroundings.
(input and output device linked to an information network with ecological data, which is placed in public space)

– How appears the new network (including the new "Indicator") in public space? (technically precise, entertaining, with a fun factor)
– How can the Indicator and the new network initialise the change in our way of thinking?
– How will the Indicator become part of our culture? (high level of acceptance in all classes of population, creating a "brand")

Where (place):
– public space in conurbations (Nagoya / Mainz)
– stand alone "indicator" in one single location or many "indicators" spread over different districts

When (scenario):
– everyday life (on a regular basis)
– case of emergency (e.g. smog alert)
– event (e.g. special localized events, neighbourhood party, earthquake alert trainings)

How (content and context):
Displaying and collecting:
Date, time, temperature (compared to the same period in the previous 1 or 10 years), pollen count (service for people with pollen allergy), air pollution (fine dust pollution, ozone pollution, greenhouse gas emission), water quality, amount of precipitation (rainfall), quality of rainfall (acid rain), energy consumption of district (proportion of renewable energy), earth activity (earthquake risk, seismometer), traffic report (amount of traffic, number of traffic jams), traffic noise

What with (technology, material):
– mobile phone network, internet, WLAN (wireless local area network), LED screens, light, sound …

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Spaces and places ....

Crossroads

Waiting at a crossing or road junction for green … Most pedestrians or drivers are receptive to useful information at the red light phase, particularly in a situation when they are a part of a "higher system", the public traffic system.
What kind of information or knowledge is attractive in this situation? Is this the right place to tell them something about the volume of traffic, air pollution or the number of traffic jams? Is it a suitable moment to display the amount of greenhouse gas emissions or the low level of traffic two hours earlier in order to change entrenched habits?
All of us are able to feel the contradiction between the common imagination of individual transport (considered as free and boundless) and the daily overload of public travelways. Let's design a place, where we get useful additional information and a chance to see our current situation in a broader context. (could be placed at crossroads, in streets or at other suitable locations.

Open spaces (parks)

Often we find green spaces of calm and relaxation in conurbations. Parks or public spaces are important to promote a feeling of well-being and these "islands" serve as meeting points or landmarks. Being closer to nature is a good moment to explain something about the threat to and the fragility of ecosystems. Maybe we will spare some time to think about issues like this in those places. Especially for children this could be the right place for education about environmental issues (like a game and as a daily part of city life).
In the final instance we have to discuss our responsibilities with regard to future generations and the effects of our current behaviour and its impact on the future.
Designing a device for interaction, a device where people can ask for information and will get a response, could be very useful. That's the task: stimulating an audience to show interest in green issues and provide them with the required information. Let's play the "green game"!

Shops

We are living in an information society, and I would say in an informed society. As customers we are able to acquire as much information about products and services as we want. It has never been easier to compare products than it is today.
But when we look at the "points of sale" we will find that there are no sophisticated tools to monitor the ecological features of certain products.
To create a place inside a shop were customers can check chosen goods in terms of environmental-friendliness and energy footprints would be great. Linked to a digital network with loads of facts about all products, this device could give you the answers required.
This new spot is the ultimate "green-checkpoint" to separate the good from the bad. We will find immediate transparency with the help of this system and every product is from now on exposed to ecologically necessary and economically beneficial competition.

Public transport

There are many of us using public transport systems. It's a matter of common knowledge that public transport reduces greenhouse gas emissions and other undesired effects on our ecosystem compared with individual transport such as using your own car.
But how can we stimulate awareness that people at stations or in trains and buses are a part of a green-minded community. No matter what reason you have to travel by train or bus, you are a part of an environmentally friendly "movement".
What information do these people need to be motivated and confirmed in their behaviour? Is it possible to develop train or bus stations into points of trendsetting green activities? Is there any service available at these places to encourage a new green attitude (like a rental service for bicycles or electrically powered cars). Maybe these places will serve as hubs to keep in touch with the latest green technology rather than being only a public thoroughfare.

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