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Futures Fair⁰⁹

SOCIETY AND STIMULUS

A season of horizon scanning at the RIBA

Retrofitting- Adaptations and Aspirations

12 May 09.00-11.30
Wren

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Dr. Matt Watson
University of Sheffield

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COUNCIL OF
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can we *normalise*
sustainable technologies
& low carbon interventions?

Matt Watson

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Becoming normal

It is [not just] about rational choice & consumer desire

- if we were rational economic agents, we would all choose to have insulation (at least)
- can householders be induced to install through shaping consumer desire?
 - as basis of marking social status?
 - as part of identity-construction?

Becoming normal

It is [not just] about rational choice & consumer desire

Becoming normal

It is [not just] about rational choice & consumer desire

It is [more] about systems and practices

- People do not consume energy:
 - we consume services
 - which use technologies
 - which consume energy
- Services and technical systems co-evolve
- Normalisation of particular technologies happens within broader processes of co-evolution
- Challenge for designers is to fit technologies into dynamics of normal service provision

Difficulties for normalisation

1. Sustainable technologies aren't normal
2. Retrofitting has to happen in houses; which are generally somebody's *home*
 - The services that use energy are used in the *doing* of home, and with it family, etc.
 - Homes are spaces of meaning, social relations, and of essential *routines*
 - Retrofitting projects are generally disruptive
3. Retrofits have to find pathways which overcome inevitable resistance

Possible pathways towards normalisation

1. Local area strategies and the (local) construction of normality
 - Normality is a collective social phenomenon, but its details can be spatially local
 - Local economies of scale in sustainable interventions extend to promoting a local normality
 - (can hope for) progressive scaling up of normality through knock on effects

Possible pathways towards normalisation

1. Local area strategies and the (local) construction of normality
2. Take advantage of existing disruptions
 - House moving – before routines established, when major disruption and investment decisions likely
 - Significant renovations/improvements for other ends

Possible pathways towards normalisation

1. Local area strategies and the (local) construction of normality
2. Take advantage of existing disruptions
3. Recognise that technical innovations are also interventions into people's practices
 - Practice Oriented Design
 - Technologies and interventions have to be designed to fit into existing practices; and to reshape practices to become more environmentally responsible

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