

Hungry 24/7? HCI Design for Sustainable Food Culture

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ABSTRACT

This workshop proposes to explore new approaches to cultivate and support sustainable food culture in urban environments via human computer interaction design and ubiquitous technologies. Food is a challenging issue in urban contexts: while food consumption decisions are made many times a day, most food interaction for urbanites occurs based on convenience and habitual practices. This situation is contrasting to the fact that food is at the centre of global environment, health, and social issues that are becoming increasingly immanent and imminent. As such, it is timely and crucial to ask: what are feasible, effective, and innovative ways to improve human-food-interaction through human-computer-interaction in order to contribute to environmental, health, and social sustainability in urban environments? This workshop brings together insights across disciplines to discuss this question, and plan and promote individual, local, and global change for sustainable food culture.

Author Keywords

food; sustainability; environment; health; social change; urban informatics; ubiquitous computing

ACM Classification Keywords

H5.0. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI):
General. K.4.2 Social Issues.

INTRODUCTION

Many interactions with food create a culture of imagining, producing, preparing, and consuming food – a ‘food culture’ of the community at a collective level. Conversely, food culture influences behaviours of both the community and the individual. Accordingly, changing individuals’ dispositions to food in day-to-day life towards more sustainable values presents opportunities for bringing about improvements in the sustainability of food cultures at a broader level. The current urban environments present particularly challenging issues as everyday food interaction for many citizens simply involves consuming ready-made meals and processed food. The problem continues to intensify with the

unprecedented scale of urban growth in recent years. Now over half of the global population is living in urban areas. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA, 2007, p. 2) predicts that the urban population will grow further to reach 60% of the entire global population by 2030.

In this current milieu, what kind of contributions can we make from the perspective of human-computer-interaction? More specifically, there are three domains of enquiry this workshop addresses in this regard. *Firstly*, what are the specific areas of sustainable food culture that require imminent attention from HCI? *Secondly*, what are innovative and effective research approaches that allow us to address and investigate such areas? *Thirdly*, what are design approaches to instigate positive changes towards sustainable food culture through HCI? The workshop intends to bring together these three *whats* to consider the fundamental and pragmatic question of how to conceptualise, design, deploy, and utilise ubiquitous technologies in everyday urban life within diverse sociocultural contexts in order to cultivate and promote sustainable food culture.

TOPICS OF INTEREST

As evident in many grassroots initiatives such as the *Local Food Movement* (collaborative effort to build more locally based, self-reliant food economies – *cf.* Feenstra, 2002, p. 100) and *Slow Food International* (non-profit group focusing on preservation of the cultural, culinary, and artistic local traditions – *cf.* Jones, et al., 2003, p. 301), significant transformations arise from large-scale consensual participation of individuals identifying with the value of a sustainable lifestyle both conceptually and pragmatically. To this end, we suggest (but do not limit to) three broad topics of interests for this workshop:

Participatory Networks

Hartley (1999, p. 178) asserts that participatory or DIY culture is fast becoming a core element of contemporary society (at least in developed nations) in which citizenship is construed through ‘practice’ of self identification by individuals rather than a ‘contract between state and subject.’ Ubiquitous technologies make urban environments ever conspicuously technosocial (technological and social) networks that are constantly reconfigured by people as its users and constituents. Therefore, urban sustainability can no longer be achieved or imagined without allowing people to voluntarily

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interact with and through their environment and other people, to recreate the place according to their needs and desires both collectively and individually. How can we create, sustain, and encompass such participatory networks via ubiquitous technologies?

Research and Design Methods

Creating sustainability networks requires identifying, conceptualising, and innovating the current technological, sociocultural, and material challenges of the given context. As such, disciplinary boundaries – particularly in the form of academic compartmentalisation – need to be reconsidered and constructively refocussed. The workshop invites discussion on empirical and theoretical cases of design and implementation strategies across various disciplines.

Deployability and Interoperability

Since sustainability – be it environmental, health, and social – has become an imminent and immanent issue, designing and developing technologies for sustainability must be practically and efficiently deployable and interoperable with adequately long lifetimes within the current conditions of society. What are some of the core elements of consideration in this regard? How can we better understand, measure, and respond to them for sustainable design and use of technologies themselves?

LOCALLY SPECIFIC VS. UNIVERSAL

While network technology is now a global lexicon it comprises of diverse dialects according to its use context. Similarly, sustainability is concurrently a global and inherently local concern; the meaning of sustainability varies amongst individuals, communities, and broader collective entities according to their value contexts. The workshop calls for a comparative look on both locally specific and common aspects of technosocial cultivation of sustainable food culture/s; it also asks how these aspects can be effectively coalesced in human-computer-interaction.

WORKSHOP FORMAT

We wish to acknowledge the cultural and ecological diversity of the Asia-Pacific region in conducting this workshop. Accordingly, the workshop functions as an open and active forum for forward-thinking practitioners and scholars to address and enhance the role of human-computer-interaction in creating and maintaining environmental, health, and social sustainability that food culture manifests in our urban daily lives. We also welcome contributions from those who are not currently in fields that are directly related to food research. To this end, the workshop is organised to incorporate a small degree of individual presentations of work with a more explorative series of collective brainstorming activities and discussions. The overall outcome will be integrated

arrays of theoretical and pragmatic approaches towards sustainable local and global food culture.

Participation and Registration

We kindly ask prospective participants to submit a short position statement (300-500 words) or abstract by 20th September 2009. Please send all submissions and queries to Jaz Choi at h.choi@qut.edu.au. Acceptance notification will be sent by 27th September 2009.

Web:

<http://food.urbaninformatics.net/events/ozchi2009/>

Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=128413300549&ref=mf>

THE ORGANISERS

Jaz Hee-jeong Choi: Researcher, Institute for Creative Industries and Innovation, Queensland University of Technology, Australia. www.nicemustard.com. Favourite dish: chilli-love-surprise/s

Marcus Foth: Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Creative Industries and Innovation, Queensland University of Technology, Australia. www.urbaninformatics.net. Favourite dish: Korean pancakes and makgeolli.

Greg Hearn: Research Professor in the Creative Industries Faculty at Queensland University of Technology, Australia. cci.edu.au/profile/greg-hearn. Favourite dish: Vietnamese tofu rice wraps – roll your own version.

Eli Blevis: Associate Professor of Informatics, School of Informatics and Computing, Indiana University--Bloomington USA. eli.informatics.indiana.edu. Favourite dish: Cheese omelette (with home grown chives).

Tad Hirsch: senior research scientist, people and practices research, Intel Corporation, USA. Favourite dish: whatever is fresh in the market this morning, with a decent glass of wine.

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