

Strategic Research Project

UserTEC

User Practices, Technologies and Residential Energy Consumption

Newsletter nr 1 – December 2013

News

This is the first newsletter from the strategic research project UserTEC. The project is a five years strategic research project based at Aalborg University and conducted in cooperation with international universities and companies within the building and energy sector.

Aim of the project

The aim of the project is to use unique data to analyze in detail the everyday life practices of households in relation to energy consumption. Furthermore, the aim is to use these insights to enhance communication on energy consumption amongst actors within the energy sector as well as to develop energy efficient building technologies and renovation processes that are more aligned with the way ordinary people actually live in their homes. By following these goals the project seeks to provide new knowledge which can help build a carbon- neutral housing sector.

Project startup

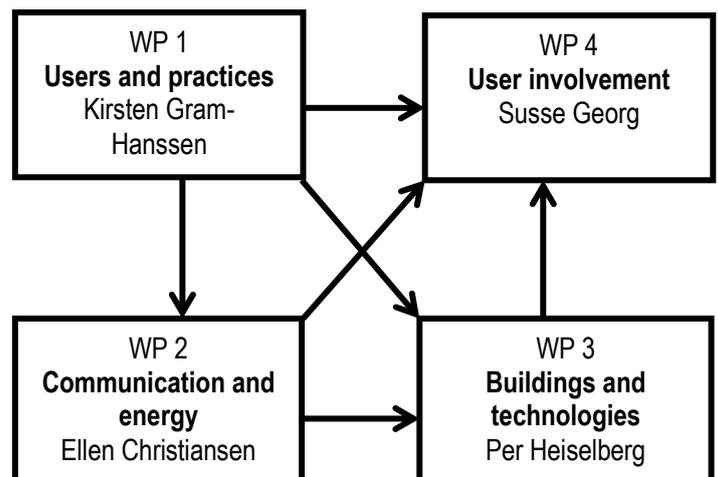
The project started with a kick-off meeting in April 2013, where all partners met. The following months have been spent on preparing contracts and employing PhD students.

The project is supported by:



The structure of the Project

The project is divided into four work packages (WP), each with a particular theme and with four different WP leaders. WP1 and WP2 will run the first three years and results from these two WP's will be used in WP3 and WP4, which will run the last three years.



WP1 is primarily based on a sociological approach, whereas WP2 is primarily based on the humanities, WP3 has a technological focus and WP4 takes a social science perspective on technology.

The first PhD students

During 2013 UserTEC employed the first four out of seven PhD students in Denmark. Their PhD projects are part of WP1 and WP2:

WP 1: Users and Practices

Anders Rhiger Hansen, MSc in Sociology

Anders uses quantitative sociological methods to investigate how Danish households consume energy. Using extensive register data on end-use energy consumption and household characteristics, the analysis will be based on practice theory.

Line Valdorff Madsen, MSc in Geography and Planning Studies

With inspiration from geographical approaches and ethnographical methods, Line examines the practices related to everyday routines and notions of comfort and home. She uses qualitative methods to examine how users practice and perceive comfort in specific segments of Danish housing.

Mette Hove Jacobsen, MSc in Sociology

Mette uses quantitative sociological methods to examine consumption clusters based on systematic differences in households' possession of and practices related to electrical appliances. She analyses the development over the last 20 years.

WP2: Communication and energy

Pernille Viktoria K. Andersen, Master of Arts (MA)

Pernille's empirical work concerns communication between the various stakeholders in a building project, where energy saving is part of the agenda. Theoretically and methodologically her approach is Design Anthropology, and she investigates the potential role of material objects as communication tools.

WP2 is up running

The work in WP2 – analysis and enhancement of communication about households' energy consumption amongst designers, engineers, architects, energy companies and utilities – is up running, with Ellen Christiansen as the WP leader, and Pernille Andersen as PhD. The following steps have been completed so far:

A case study on how households perceive living with "Home Automation Systems" in the context of energy consumption. From this case study was derived a design strategy called 'home-keeping' and a development model.

Partner visits: in the late summer Ellen and Pernille met with most of the business partners to present the plan for WP2, and negotiate forms of collaboration. One partner collaboration is initiated: the purpose is to identify types and forms of knowledge about household energy consumption of value in product development.

*Workshop at UserTEC October partner meeting: The aim of the workshop was to discuss how to make user voices count in development processes. In two workshop sessions participants discussed: 1) *What companies want to hear from users*, and 2) *Where to make user voices count in the course of a development process*.*



UserTEC is a strategic research project lead by Kirsten Gram-Hanssen, SBI, Aalborg University. It is conducted in cooperation with University of Cambridge, University of Oxford, Linköping University, Delft University of Technology and Technical University of Denmark, as well as in cooperation with major Danish and international companies within the building and energy sector. More info at: <http://sbi.dk/usertec>