



YCCSA Seminar Series Summer 2019

An interdisciplinary seminar series hosted by the York Cross-disciplinary Centre for Systems Analysis aimed at researchers from all disciplines

Co-Designing with Things

Professor Chris Speed

**School of Design
University of Edinburgh**

**Friday, 21 June 2019
Ron Cooke Hub, RCH/204 at 13:30**

Abstract:

What happens when we give physical things wallets containing digital currencies? How can this alter power relationships and shift social dynamics? Chris Speed will explore these questions by highlighting the use of smart contracts in design, from a coffee machine that lets you vote for your coffee bean and pays those who clean it, to a hairdryer that trades on the energy market to offer the best price for drying your hair. The talk will frame these design prototypes as forms of 'apocalyptic design', a term borrowed from the genre of 'apocalyptic cinema' that foretell an end to the world. Recovering Franklin Ginn's analysis of the Hungarian film 'The Turin Horse' in which we see how the animals, artefacts and environments all hold a more-than-human power over the destiny of a community. From a disobedient horse which infuriates its master, to paraffin that rejects its propensity to light when it encounters the flame, we find an alternative ontological framework in which a 'society of objects' is counter to one in which humans should expect control. If we extend Tarr's thesis, the smart city that digital architects crave may be one in which 'things' decided to reject a future in which humans thrive, in favour of one in which artefacts and living things and can live for as long as possible.

Design is increasingly adopting a more-than-human position in order to better understand the limitations of human-centred perspectives that marginalise other living and non-living actors. By introducing projects that disrupt human agency, Chris will explore how 'apocalyptic design' case studies for the Centre for Design Informatics reconfigure human and more-than-human relations, and rebalance the use of agency away from the user.

The seminar includes a refreshment break to fuel interdisciplinary discussion

**Ron Cooke Hub is on Heslington East Campus – accessible by free bus services
Nos. 66 and UB1 running at frequent intervals from Heslington West.
The YCCSA Seminar room is on the second floor**