

MEDIA AND HOME RENOVATION: SHAPING CARBON FUTURES

What is media's role in shaping the carbon profile of the renovated home?

Answering this question is critical to understanding the context in which carbon emissions are increasing in Australia's housing sector.

Interview based methodology

Ethnographically informed interviews capture a contextual understanding of the dynamics of dwelling practices, renovation, and increasing carbon emissions.

- 17 interviews with 22 participants
- average 2 hours long
- tour of the home where possible
- demonstrations of media use
- predominantly women, university educated, higher income, anglo-hetero-couples with children.

Data analysis approached through a social practices lens underpinned by concepts of late modernity— e.g. *chronic revision in light of new information and knowledge*.

Preliminary data analysis has found that:

1. The home is spatially and materially shaped by the daily practices of the people who live in it.

"Having it as a space that you have access to interaction whilst you're doing either normal chores or having an entertaining space" – Danielle, Ormond, describing her open plan living space.

2. The material configurations of the home can in turn shape practices.

"My husband actually does most of the cooking, but the kids love sitting up there and watching him cook dinner and [he] pass bits of cut-offs of vegetables to them as he's cooking" – Amanda, Reservoir, describing the overhang on her benchtop.

3. Home renovations may be triggered by a misalignment or conflict between existing practices, and between current and future imagined practices.

"The toilet opens onto the living room, or the TV room, where we spend a lot of time... we were talking about perhaps re-configuring a few of the walls in there" – Liam, Seddon

4. The reflexive practice of 'doing research', where participants predominantly use media to seek information, ideas and inspiration on design and technical elements of their renovation, is a key part of home renovation.

"I did a bit of research online and chose a Mitsubishi because they flue a longer distance" – Monica, Montmorency

"[I typed in] art deco bathrooms and not so much for the spatially laying out [of] things but more for just seeing if there were design things that might inspire me" – Aneka, Brunswick

5. Home renovation is best understood as a process of revising everyday dwelling practices to align with future imagined practices.

"I keep joking to Rachel when she says, 'oh there's mess everywhere'. I'm like, 'it's alright we're about to move into our renovated house and it's going to be this utopia, no mess everywhere, we won't have any clutter, it's going to be fine, let's just wait for that, it's going to happen'" – David, Mentone

6. As well as being a key element in the revision process, media provides the 'new information and knowledge' described in the late modern condition of chronic revision. Thus, media contributes to a cycle of resolving and perpetuating conflict between practices and their meanings.

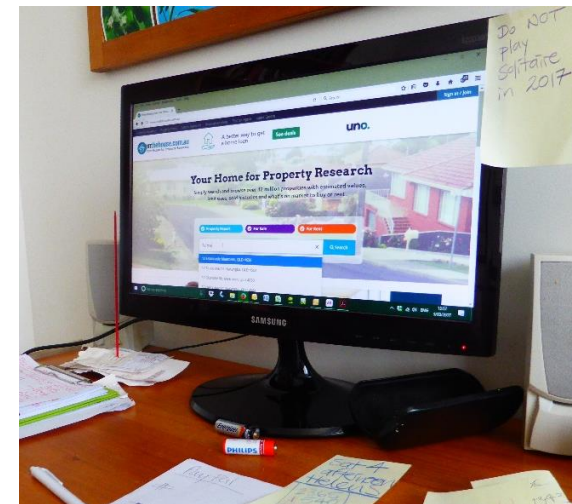


Figure 1: Liz, Wonthaggi, demonstrated how she researched her home renovation (note the post-it stuck to the monitor)



Figure 2: Diane, Maryborough, chose this dishwasher to save her bending down as she gets older

Conclusions

Homes are configured through the iterative relationship of everyday practices and spatial configurations. If media plays a role in resolving and perpetuating conflict in everyday practices and future imagined practices, then media also has the potential to generate innovation in both everyday practices and home renovation. A thorough analysis of this dynamic will provide insight into how this innovation might occur.

Anticipated impacts

Looking beyond standard behaviour based responses to carbon reduction, this research uses a practice-based approach to demonstrate how media may shape innovation in design and material selection for renovation. It explores how everyday dwelling practices are constituted and how, through conflict and competition, they shape each other. Highlighting the complex dynamics that shape renovation outcomes, this analysis is relevant to industry (designers, practitioners, retailers) and policy makers seeking to reduce the carbon impact of housing.

Media shapes key meanings about what a home is, and should be. Low carbon is not one of these key meanings.

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