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The Internet at the eco-village: Performing sustainability in the twenty-first century

Teresa Cerratto-Pargman, Daniel Pargman, Bonnie Nardi

Abstract

Is the digital infrastructure and its footprint an ideological blind spot for recently emerging ecological communities, including eco-villages? This paper examines how a group of people who are concerned with environmental issues such as peak oil and climate change are orchestrating a transition toward a more sustainable and resilient way of living. We studied a Swedish eco-village, considering how computing in this community contributes to defining what alternative ways of living might look like in the twenty-first century. Drawing on a social-ecological perspective, the analysis illustrates, on the one hand, that the Internet, along with the digital devices we use to access it, capitalizes and mobilizes values, knowledge and social relationships that in turn enhance resilience in the eco-village. On the other hand, the analysis shows that an explicit focus on ecological values is not sufficient for a community of individuals to significantly transform Internet use to conform to ecological ideals. This work contributes to a deeper understanding of the imbrication of social technologies with practices that are oriented to perform sustainable and resilient ways of living.

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