

Contested interfaces:

exploring junctions between consumers and infrastructure providers

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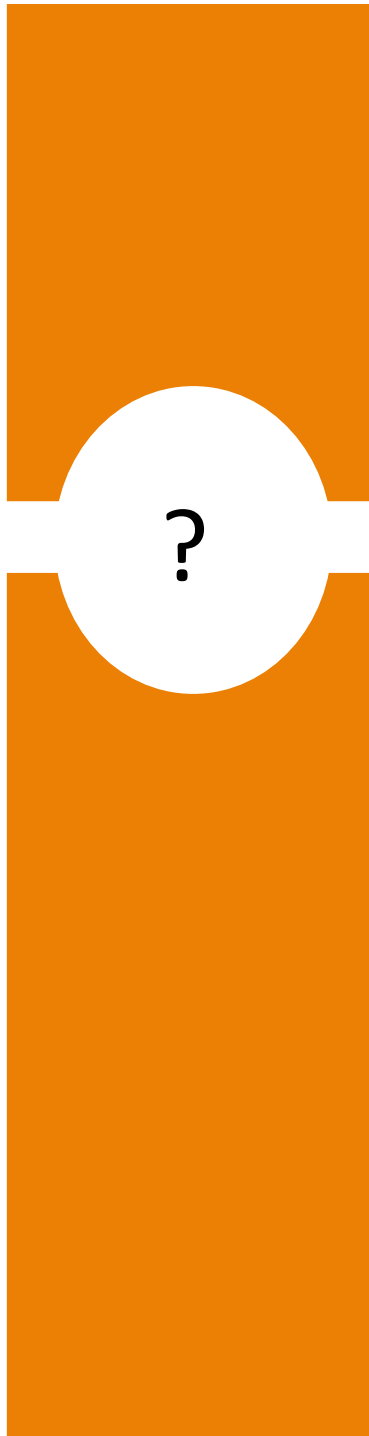
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Consumers

Private consumption
Choices and alternatives
Smallish investments
Market competition
Fast changing
Appliances, devices

This is the concern of consumers



Infrastructure providers

Collective provision e.g. electricity grid
Huge investments
State involvement
Public goods
Slowly changing

This is not the concern of consumers

What can we learn from two examples of interaction at interfaces:

Our purpose is to raise questions about the political work of boundary making

Electricity
consumers



Grid
Electricity suppliers

Electric vehicle
users:

Charging at home



Charging beyond the
home



Grid
Electricity suppliers
Car manufacturers

Smart metering assumptions

More information to the consumer means less consumption
Information needs to be clear and visible

Issues

Information about energy is part of access to the grid

Information is an extra service.

Information included as part of access to the grid
Industry: wants to distinguish between energy and information:
aim to “sell” information as a separate service



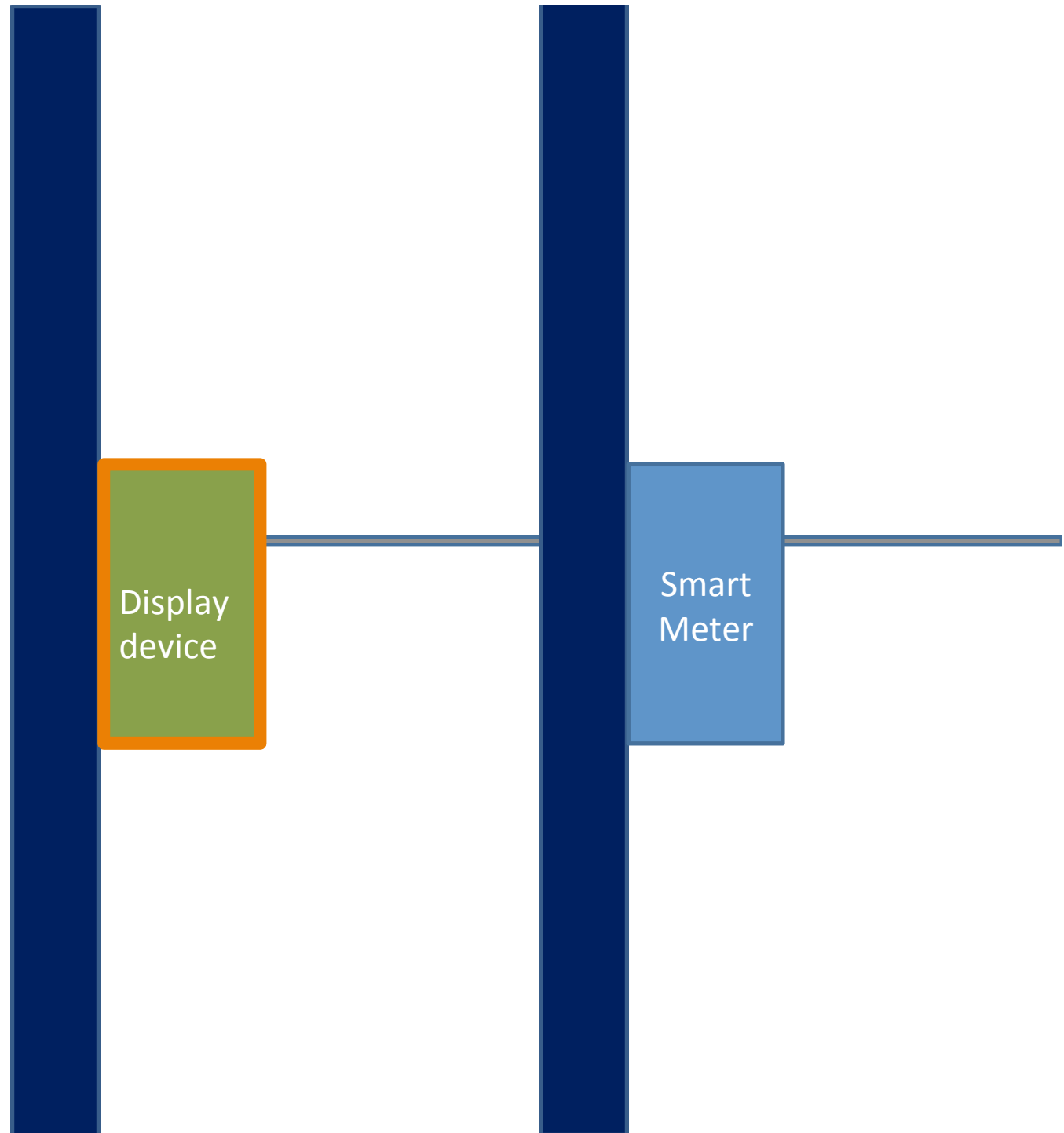
Does the display+meter constitute part of the infrastructure?

If so does this represent an incursion into what is properly the realm of the home?

Or is it the reverse?

Are smart meters being configured as consumer appliances when they should properly count as infrastructure?

Answers are part of an ongoing battle to define the market, the consumer and the limits of the infrastructure



Market competition
Appliances

Private goods
Individual consumers

Ambivalent interfaces

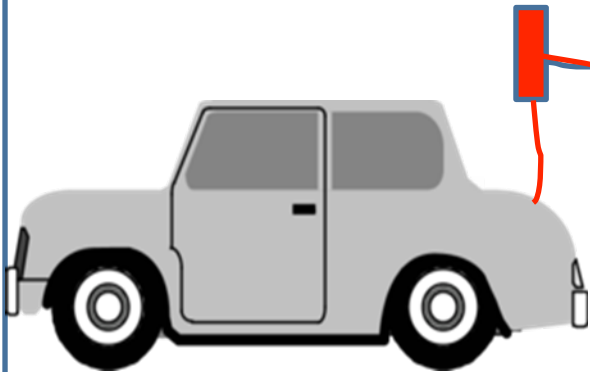
E.g. in home displays
E.g. Wall boxes

Natural monopoly
Infrastructure

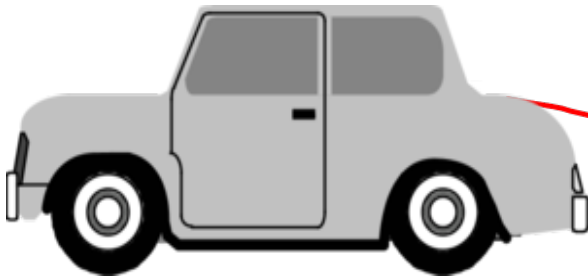
Public goods
State provision



The space of the home

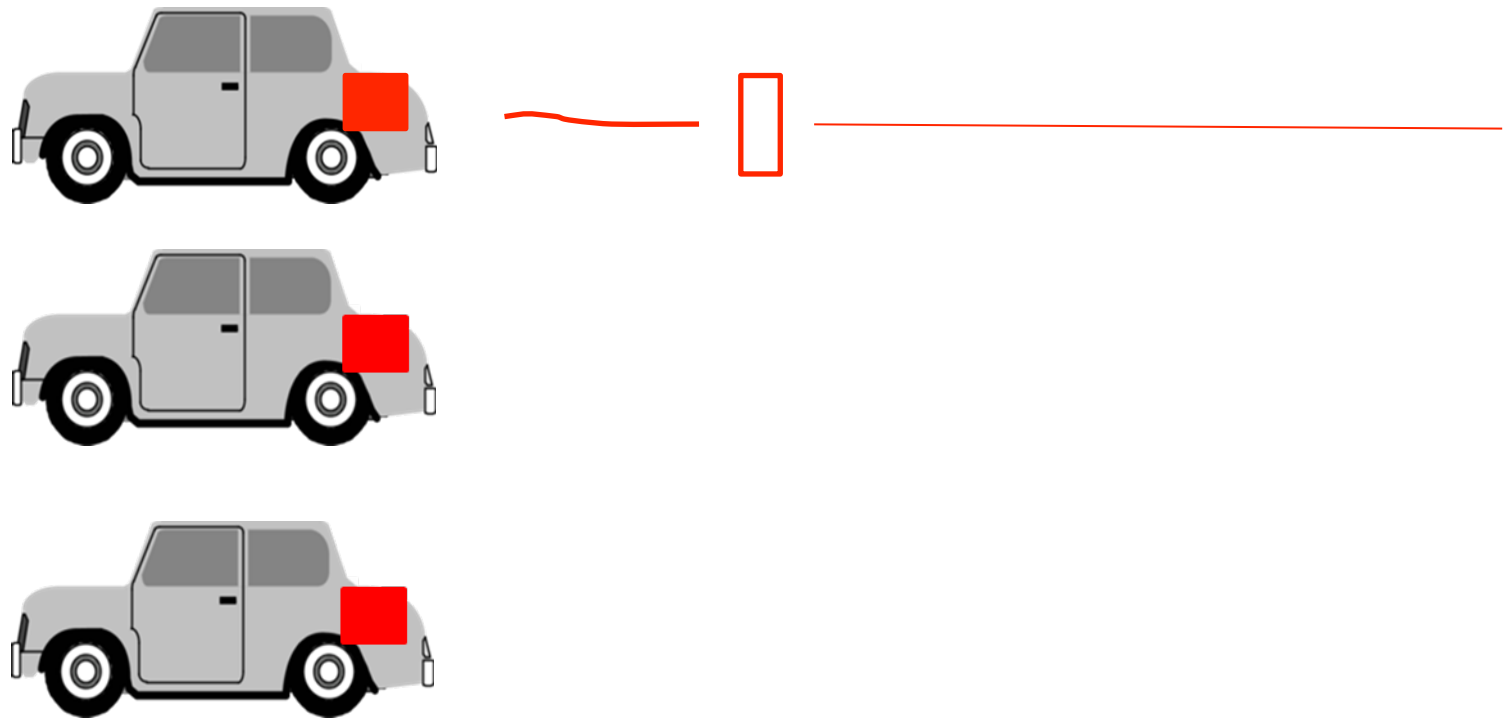


A space which is not the home e.g. shops, petrol station, on street



Charging points: who pays for them, where are they, who maintains them?

The appliance becomes
part of the
infrastructure



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Both cases are instances of history in the making: the boundaries are not settled

- Where lines are drawn reflects different, sometimes competing interests
- Where lines are drawn matters for the relation between demand and supply and for how that is organised

Different interfaces and business models reflect and reproduce

- the social and political organisation of state and market action
- ideas about energy: as resource, as service
- interpretations of public and private space and responsibility
- ideas about the roles of consumers and providers in constituting demand

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This is crucial for consumption

How are these relationships organised?



is not located only in the actions and "choices" of end-users but is also shaped by technical systems, market relations and more crucially by the interfaces connecting them.



Demand is fundamentally connected to supply. This connection is shaped by material and organisational interfaces. Where collective provision stops and where private consumption starts depends on the location and design of such interfaces and vice versa.



Is not simply about the "take up" of pre-defined technologies, or about consumer acceptance and "individual" behaviour



Is about: politics, plugs, markets and infrastructures