

Sensors as an observational method

confidence and trust between researchers and study participants

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Sensors as an observational method

A cause to commit to...

...why should anyone agree to intense monitoring for observational purposes?

Knowing what you are agreeing to...

...being informed about complex and mysterious technologies

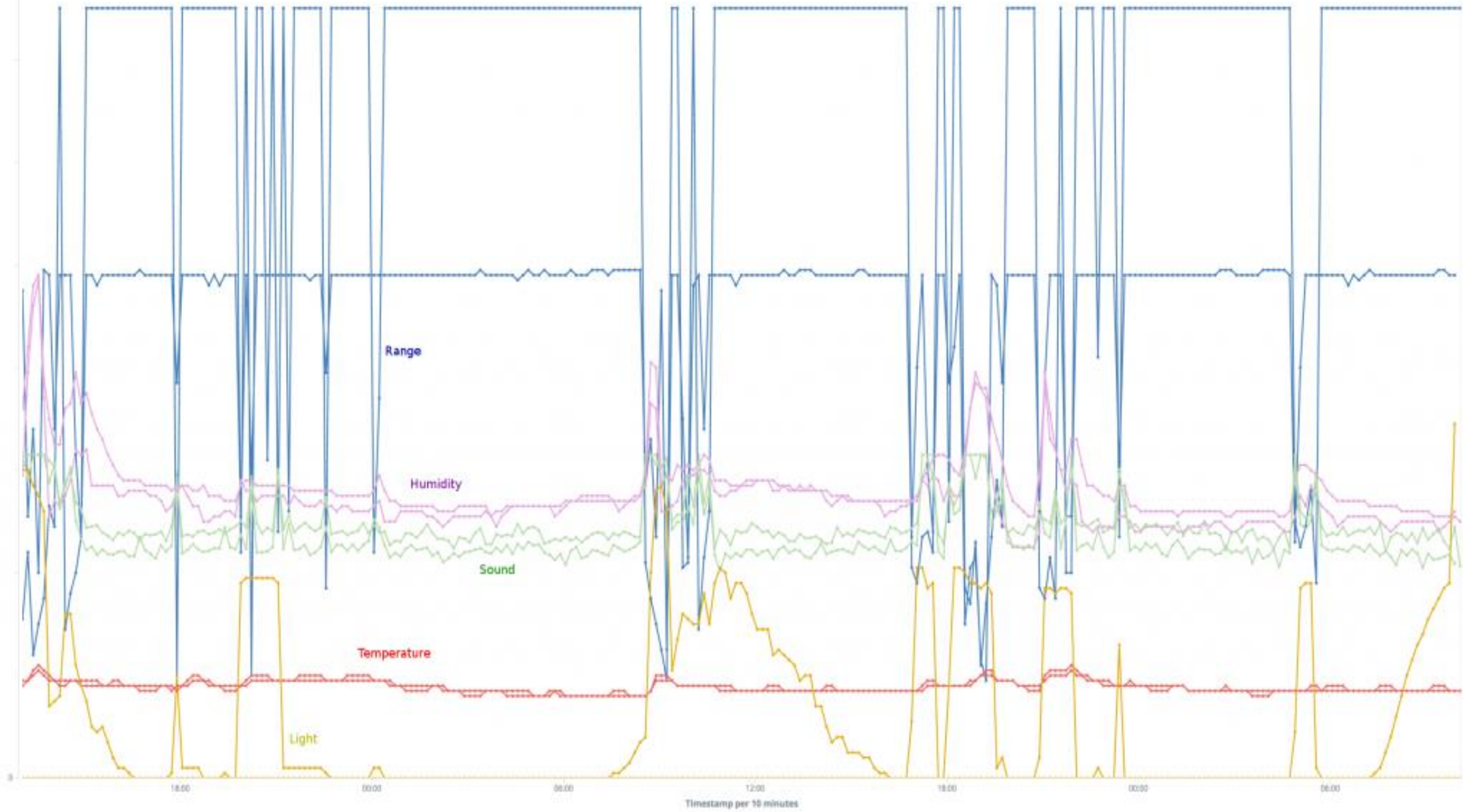
Knowing and caring about what goes on...



A cause to commit to

As solely a methodological trial of using sensors to study social life, it was a 'hard sell' to commit participants, and so would be any research design that is not problem-specific enough, lacking in relevance to people's lives and not aiming to benefit a social group and/or society at large.





46 hours of sensor-generated data from a UK home kitchen in late November.

Which?

POLICY REPORT JUNE 2018

Control, Alt or Delete?

The future of consumer data

Conversation about the 'smart' new world.

It is inevitable, this is out of our control

...dominant discourse on progress

Not realising how much can be observed

...dominant practice of sharing and selling data

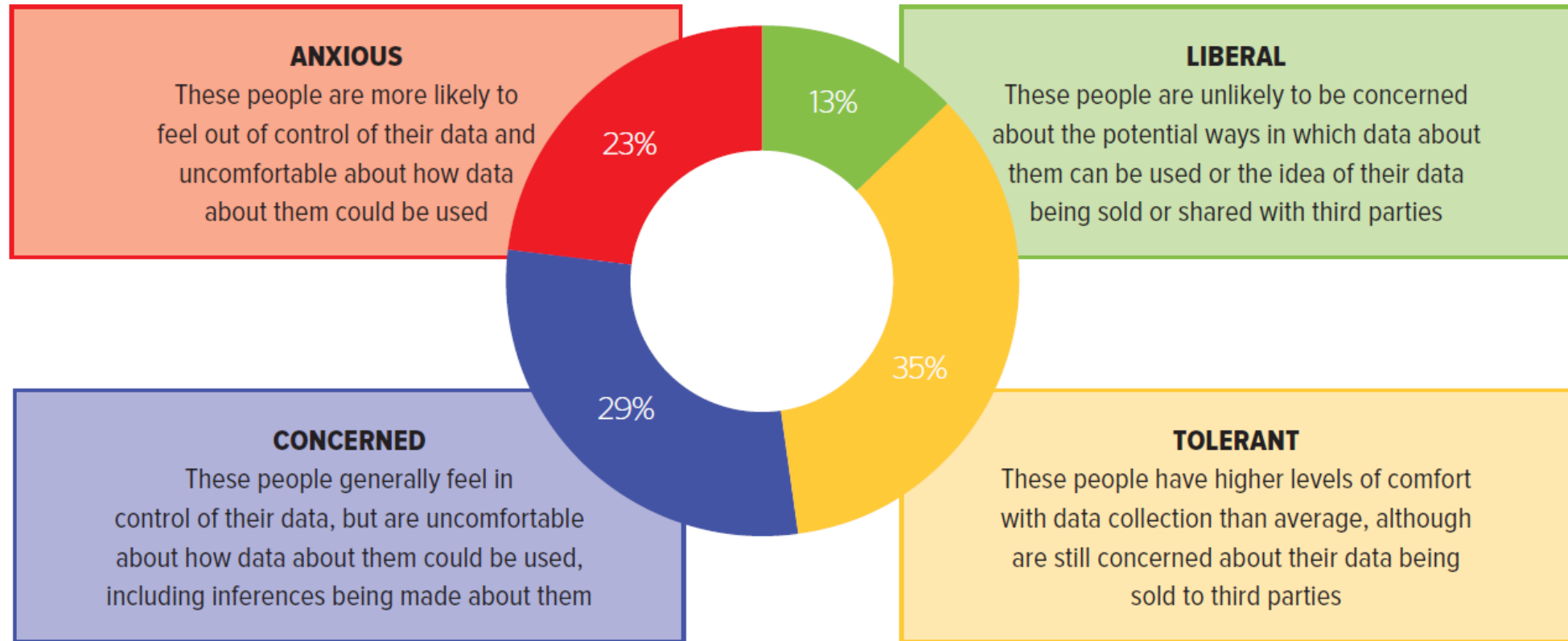
Not being clear about relevant contextual information

...data practices can tell more about the observers, than the observed

A cause to trust researchers?

...in good faith that social research must be valuable to society in the long run

Figure 1: Consumer Data segmentation attitudes



The relationship between attitudes and practice is poor – a problem for communicating with research participants their ongoing commitments to an observational study

I: - how would you explain it -?

R2: I find it difficult because the more I read it, the more I second-guessed myself and I said, so, the way I explained it was (*clears throat*) as far as I can understand, this is about, erm, erm, this is not the prime experiment yet, this is about whether or not you can use, there are useful types of sensing that you can do in homes -

I: **Hmm.**

R2: - that collect data that is usable, erm, to let you know more about the home environment, how it's used and so on and so forth -

I: **Hmm, hmm.**

R2: - and, erm, and these sensors are here and the experiment is there, I guess, to collect a lot of data to see whether the data actually turns out to be useful and the sensors themselves are useful or whether you need more or different or, or whatever. So, it's like a pre-experiment, experiment in a way, to me, in that you would then maybe move on to another one -

I: **Hmm.**

R2: - with more sophisticated mechanisms and that's sort of how I positioned it.

R: I couldn't identify exactly what the experiment was about except to say that it was sensors gathering information about how many, for instance, people came through erm how hot the house was, humidity, erm, erm, how much electricity being used at certain times, you know, the fluctuations during the day. Erm, that's all I can say really 'cause I'm not [laughter] wasn't quite sure myself [laughter] erm... yeah, but erm... as I say I don't, I, as you can probably see by the data I, I, I don't have people coming around as I used to...

R: I mean, one, one of the visitors was a girl aged 10 and I did say to the father, "Is it alright if we record?" (inaudible 00:04:07). There was nothing personal or secret about it, so... you know.

I: Yeah. Okay. So that would not have been a problem. But did you find yourself ...you were explaining to other people?

R: Oh only just very superficially, just saying, "Look, these funny things on the walls, they're recording light, movement and everything."

I: So you wouldn't explain what the study was about really?

R: No, no, no, no.

R: Oh, yeah, I forgot to do all, I t..., everybody, erm, cos we have, it, that's, it's really hard, that's actually one criticism, it was really, really hard to manage cos we have lots of people in and out -

I: **Hmm.**

R: - all the time -

I: **Hmm.**

R: - and although, you know, again, for the first two or three weeks, I told everyone what was and blah, blah, blah and that we needed their permission, and everyone was like, everyone was fine about that ...then actually getting someone to sign a form, it kind of doesn't work like that when you have some friends around your house.

I: **Hmm.**

R: But the thing is, they all would, if, you know, if you went back and said, "Oh, you know that thing I said I need your permission" but, erm, that was a bit, erm, no, that, that, erm, no -

I: **So, you didn't actually get any signatures?**

R: - no, no, no, none at all.

R: Well most of all they wanted to know if they... Yeah, I would just say, "They're recording those things' movements, dust, etc, noise, but not what we're saying just how loud it is."

I: Yeah.

R; Umm, yeah, umm, and they would say, "Ooh, why are you doing that?" and I'd say, "I wouldn't remember." I said, "Oh do you wanna read it?" And then mostly they'd say, "Oh no, don't bother." (Laughs)

R2: [our friend]'s a... He...he's an IT boy.

R: He's IT, yeah.

R2: So he was quite intrigued with it.

I: Okay.

R: Did we tell him first or did he ask?

R2: I think we told him first.

R: Okay. That it wasn't recording what we were saying, yeah.

R2. Yeah. But no one else really paid any...any attention to them...