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Chris Speed
University of Edinburgh

**“Apocalyptic Design: The Threat of Losing
Human Agency in Distributed Networks”**



Friday, March 15, 2019
3:00-4:00
CIT 368

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. By introducing projects that remove agency from humans, 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.

Prof. Chris Speed is Chair of Design Informatics at the University of Edinburgh where he collaborates with a wide variety of partners to explore how design provides methods to adapt, and create products and services within a networked society. He is especially favours transgressive design interventions, to help identify and promote the values we care about most, including coffee machines that order their own ethical supplies, random lift buttons that take you to unexpected floors, and apps for sham marriages. Chris is co-editor of the journal *Ubiquity* and co-directs the Design Informatics Research Centre that is home to a combination of researchers working across the fields of interaction design, temporal design, anthropology, software engineering and digital architecture, as well as the PhD, MA/MFA and MSc and Advanced MSc programmes.

Host: Bertram Malle/HCRI and Andy Law, RISD