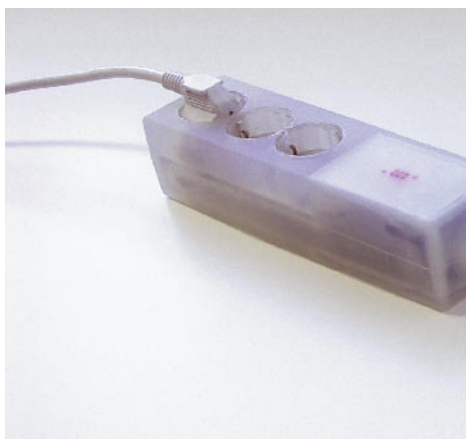


power-aware cord designing for energy awareness

Design shapes our everyday material world, thereby inhibiting some actions and affording others. During the 20th century, design has been used successfully to increase our energy consumption through the creation of electrical appliances. Today, on the other hand, these appliances should support awareness of energy use and efficiency. The 'Power-Aware cord' is a power strip that visualizes the amount of electricity that flows through to the connected appliances, in order to be an educational as well as functional product.



invisible energy

Interviews have shown that electricity in many cases seems to be taken for granted - for example most people have no clue as to how much electricity they use and energy is mostly seen as something fairly invisible. Today, the power driven household appliances seem to appear out of nowhere. All we have to do is to pay the bill the energy company sends us. The Power-Aware Cord tries to change this as it invites users to plug in different appliances and experiment with how these relate to each other in terms of energy.

visualizing energy

The user interface of the Power-Aware Cord is the same as for any ordinary electrical power strip, with the addition of a dynamic visualization along the cord where the current use of electricity is represented through glowing pulses, and intensity of light. The entire cord acts as an ambient display to inform users of electrical current passing through en route to electrical appliances plugged into the extension sockets. When used, the Power-Aware Cord immediately responds on changes, giving the user direct feedback and the feeling of both seeing and interacting with electricity.

initial user feedback

During the user studies, a majority of the test subjects perceived the blue light as a representation of the electrical current. Most test participants seemed to easily grasp its functionality and immediately came up with examples of how they would use it. One woman explained how she would use it to teach her children about electricity. Others reflected on how it could be used to test stand-by products. Our test participants clearly saw the need for a device like the Power-Aware Cord. They also seemed to appreciate its pedagogical properties. One participant clearly perceived the light as electricity, as she explained: "I think this is what power cords look like on the inside. You have just made it transparent!"

project team

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STATIC! www.tii.se/static

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