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Living Lab project brief – developing a ‘fair’ PC?

Description of the paper

This paper describes a potential project to examine how the principles of circular economy and traceable supply chains could be applied to the development of other products e.g. a personal computer/laptop.

Draft research question

How could the principles of circular economy and socially responsible, traceable supply chains demonstrated in the Fairphone be applied to other products, and what attempts are out there to do so?

Background

The Fairphone is praised by many for its conflict minerals free claim, and the built-in ability to easily replace parts of the phone to increase product longevity. Many NGOs and researchers are discussing whether there could be a similar ‘Fair PC’, taking the learning from the Fairphone to other computing products.

The University is working in various ways to promote circular economy through procurement and research, to contribute to combating conflict minerals through its Conflict Minerals Policy, and to promote sustainable IT, for example through its Sustainable IT Group and PC re-use project. We are also a founding member of Electronics Watch, an organisation that monitors working conditions in factories on behalf of public procurers in Europe.

The aim of this project is to get a better understanding of efforts and initiatives globally to produce more socially responsible and sustainable IT equipment.

Objectives

- Assess the SRS credentials of the Fairphone and whether/how they could in theory be applied to other computing equipment
- Research initiatives/projects taking place globally that aim to produce socially responsible and sustainable IT equipment, providing information on their objectives, progress and challenges
- Identify appropriate next steps for the University, for example in terms of: products to explore procuring, research, collaboration with industry/NGO partners