

Geographies of Practice in Domestic Energy Consumption

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In response to climate change concerns and escalating utility costs, residential occupants are under increasing pressure to reduce their household energy consumption. Commonplace policies and interventions to address energy use include the adoption of cutting-edge technologies, stringent energy efficiency measures, home improvement programmes, and behavior change campaigns. However, scholars in geography, science and technology studies, and related disciplines have long argued that such efforts remain fragmented and fail to recognize the linkages between occupants, regulators, designers, utility operators, building managers, and others. Recent research in the area of residential energy use has built on a practice-based approach, which allows for a crosscutting perspective on these issues. This view holds that energy consumption is inscribed in everyday, taken-for-granted activities that take place around the home. By focusing on practices, it is possible to identify the connections between the everyday routines and activities of residential users and the design and management activities of design professionals, building managers, engineers and regulatory agents. Energy practices are thus understood as activities that connect technologies and discourses, materiality and emotion, mundane habits and technical practice. The practices approach recasts the geography of energy consumption by cutting across conventional categories of supply and demand, network and building, expert and non-expert, and so on to highlight the interconnections between the utility and domestic landscapes.

The purpose of this session is to bring together scholars from geography, STS, sociology and related disciplines, who are interested in energy, the built environment and the practices of everyday life. Suggested contributions might include, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Interventions in household energy consumption and their impacts
- Changing user practices in the adoption of sustainable energy technologies
- Notions of comfort, cleanliness and convenience and their application in the field of domestic consumption
- Household energy networks as sociotechnical assemblages
- Energy, energy-related technologies and their structuring of household energy consumption
- Understanding the interactions between various actors (building professionals, designers, engineers, users, regulators)
- Discourses of specific end-user groups including the elderly, children, low-income, and other vulnerable populations
- The changing role of experts in developing and applying energy efficiency strategies
- The role of communities and neighborhoods in shaping residential energy practices

If you are interested in presenting a paper in this session, please email a title and an abstract of no more than 300 words to Dana Abi-Ghanem (dana.abighanem@manchester.ac.uk) and Andrew Karvonen (Andrew.karvonen@manchester.ac.uk) by 5pm 21 February 2011. The session proposal will be submitted by 25th of February and confirmation sent to participants. More information on the RGS-IBG conference is available here:

<http://www.rgs.org/WhatsOn/ConferencesAndSeminars/Annual+International+Conference/AC2011.htm>