



INSTITUT FÜR HÖHERE STUDIEN
INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES
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Public Lecture:

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How social theories of practice can help climate change policy

Date: Monday, January, 30th, 2012

Time: 16:30-18:00

Place: Institut für Höhere Studien, Seminarraum Soziologie

Contemporary patterns of consumption are almost certainly unsustainable. In response, governments have tried to persuade citizens to use less energy, water and other natural resources. In taking this approach they frame consumption as a matter of choice. But what if consumption is better understood as an outcome of social practice? Current patterns of diet, hygiene, mobility and comfort depend on unsustainably resource intensive patterns of consumption and if there is to be any way forward they will have to change. Can policy makers engender transitions in practice on the scale and at the rate required, and if so what might this involve? In addressing these questions I explore the relevance of social theories of practice for climate change policy.

Paper: Shove, E. (2010). "Beyond the ABC: climate change policy and theories of social change." *Environment and Planning A* 42(6): 1273-1285.

Elizabeth Shove is professor of Sociology at Lancaster University, England. Her research focuses on issues of ordinary consumption, everyday technology, social practice and sustainability. *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience: the social organization of normality* (Berg 2003), argues that resource use is an outcome of the routine reproduction of daily life. Later work, including *The Design of Everyday Life*, with Matt Watson, Martin Hand and Jack Ingram (Berg 2007) explores the relation between objects, competence and practice, arguing that consumption and use are closely intertwined. Related themes of routine and habit are taken

forward in *Time, Consumption and Everyday Life* (Berg 2009) a collection edited with Frank Trentmann and Rick Wilk. Elizabeth's most recent book *The Dynamics of Social Practice*, with Mika Pantzar and Matt Watson will be published by Sage in 2012. *The Dynamics of Social Practice* sets out a distinctive method of conceptualising and analysing everyday life and how it changes, and demonstrates how such understanding might influence policy. The relevance of social theory for policy is a consistent theme in Elizabeth's work, and is explored in a range of recent articles including "Beyond the ABC: climate change policy and theories of social change." *Environment and Planning A* 42(6): 1273-1285, and in an 'Extraordinary Lecture' on how the social sciences can help climate change policy (see: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/staff/shove/lecture/filmedlecture.htm>). Elizabeth is a member of the Sustainable Practices Research Group management team, and holds an ESRC climate change leadership fellowship "Transitions in Practice: Climate Change and Everyday Life".