



INSTITUT FÜR HÖHERE STUDIEN
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Public Lecture:

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What is energy for?

Date: Monday, March, 23th, 2015

Time: 16:30-18:00

Place: Institut für Höhere Studien, Seminarraum Soziologie

Despite public and political interest in reducing energy demand for environmental reasons, few pause to think about the different and changing practices and services that underpin energy demand. People do not use energy for its own sake: rather, energy is used in accomplishing social practices at home, at work and in moving around. With this proposition as my starting point, I consider the changing rhythms of energy demand through the day and the year. I comment on the ways in which infrastructures and appliances are implicated in constituting – and not just meeting energy demand, and I discuss aspects of ‘invisible’ energy policy, identifying areas of public policy that are important for demand but that are not usually seen in these terms. In exploring these issues my purpose is to highlight the social foundations of energy demand and to consider the implications of such an analysis for demand reduction.

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".